



JOEY THE DREAMER

HENRY
•OYEN•

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JOEY THE DREAMER



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JOEY THE DREAMER

A TALE OF CLAY COURT

By
Henry Oyen



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JOEY THE DREAMER

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CHAPTER I

IT ALL began through a letter that was awaiting me upon my return to the city after two months spent in close association with trout, bass, pines, and other desirable things of the North in summer time. It was the year 19—, a year of a Presidential election. The letter was from the secretary of the Society for the Improvement of Civic and Commercial Conditions in the City, and it announced a meeting Monday, the third, eight p. m., at the club. My attendance was particularly desired; there was a matter which was certain to develop to my interest. Could I come?

A glance at the calendar showed that it was Monday, the third, and the clock showed seven forty-five. I had come back just in time; nothing remained but to call a cab and bid the man hurry.

The Society was sitting in comfortable state, the small of its various backs resting solidly on the seats of the big club chairs. It was a notable gathering. There was, first of all, Dicky Clews, the youngest and the richest of them all. Then came the ex-minister to Austria. Seated beside him was the senator's brother, and the man whose money had bought the senator's seat, and who controlled him to his last opinion. Next were four ordinary millionaires, then the Rev. David Arthur, the celebrated

divine, and half a dozen others who merely made up the quorum. It was a gathering of City Barons, and to my amazement my arrival was received with something resembling enthusiasm. Even the listless Dicky Clews rose on his long legs to shake hands.

“As I live and breathe, 'tis John Lord,” said Dicky. “The man we are yearning for, and at the psychological moment.”

Even the ex-minister was genial. The signs were obvious; the Society had decided that I could be of use to it.

It seemed that an article under my signature, “The Extravagance of the Indigent,” had done the work. It had been printed recently and had attracted the Society’s attention. It was, said the Society, true to life.

“The very man,” repeated Dicky Clews. “Swear if 'tisn’t a regular godsend.”

“What?” I asked.

“Your dropping in here now, fit and brown, full of steam, ready to work like a reg’lar little dynamo.”

“Why?”

“Because we need you, dear man. Crave your expert knowledge, and all that. We were just talking about—about these.” Dicky thrust a reprint of the article under my nose, and nodded westward at the same time. “Tenementers, you know. They—they’re getting restless, you know, uneasy; and we can’t have it, you know, this Presidential year of 19—.”

I did not know, of course, having been in a land of peace, where newspapers were not. The great, gray-

headed ex-minister, smiling indulgently at Dicky's attempt at explanation, hastened to help him out.

"This summer, Mr. Lord," he began, "unfortunately, so far has been one of strange unrest in that portion of the city which you treat so clearly in your excellent and much discussed paper." The ex-minister's delivery was classic; the impression he gave out was that of a monument—a monument to civilization—speaking. He bowed. I bowed. It was very pretty. "As Mr. Clews so succinctly states, the people over there—" his long white hand indicated the West Side—"for some unknown reason seem to be disturbed. An unusual condition seems to exist. No specific turbulence of the ordinary sort, such as strikes or riots, has taken place; but, on the other hand, there has developed a hitherto unknown undercurrent of restlessness which is deeply affecting the people. This, of course, is seriously detrimental to their welfare, and, also, is not a desirable condition to prevail in a year when an important Presidential campaign is to be made. It is the purpose of this body to strive to regulate all things vitally connected with the affairs of the municipality in a manner most conducive to civic order and welfare. To do this we must have intelligent and comprehensive information regarding all the phases of the city's life."

"And that's what we want you to get," interrupted Dicky. "Go over there and see what the deuce is the matter with 'em."

The ex-minister smiled again indulgently upon Dicky.

He could afford to; Dicky's fortune topped them all by an uncomfortable margin.

"Your familiarity with the subject, Mr. Lord, as demonstrated in your paper, seems to us to make you the logical man to conduct such an investigation," continued the great man. "In short, this Society wishes to appoint you its special commissioner to study the unusual conditions prevalent in that quarter of the city this summer."

"Yes," said Dicky, "you've read up on 'em; you know about 'em. Beside," he continued, rising to go, "you've got the — what d'you call it? — cold, mathematical faculty of accurate observation. Accept? That's the stuff."

Accept? Of course I would accept. I was hungry for work, and this promised to be interesting. I hastened to express my satisfaction. The Society sighed a sigh of real relief.

"Now," said Dicky, yawning, "we'll know how to handle 'em."

The Society adjourned at once, and the Rev. David Arthur and I walked from the room together.

"Strange," said he, in his scholarly tones, "what a vast amount of interest at present is being displayed in that comparatively unimportant quarter of the city which you are to study. It amazes me. Who would have thought, say ten or fifteen years ago, that the class which lives over there ever could force itself into a position that calls for close attention from cultured, superior people? And now, why, everybody seems to have given

some thought to the subject. More than that, Mr. Lord, this thought is having a strange, undesirable effect upon some of our best people—our young people, of course. Would you believe it, my daughter Ruth has been so far carried away by her interest in this subject that she is actually living over there, at a Settlement House, I believe!"

I said: "What?" in a tone that made his Reverence pause and ponder. He thrust his under-lip forward thoughtfully.

"Yes, yes," he said slowly, "that is so: you have some acquaintance with Ruth, haven't you?"

And that was how it all began.

Thirty minutes later I stood in the hallway of the Tenement, and in those thirty minutes I had passed from one world to another. A car ride to the Settlement House had proven the Rev. David Arthur in error. Ruth was not there, was in no way connected with the institution. They merely knew that she was living in the Tenement at the head of Clay Court. Another car hurried me up the crowded, well-lighted Avenue and dropped me into the gut-like darkness of Clay Court; and I had only to go straight forward, to where the Tenement's lights appeared like bleary red eyes in the dark, to walk straight into the ever-open hall.

The hallway was a pit, with a stingy gas jet near the door, and, for an instant, the sense was upon me of having stepped into the path of a storm. Two men stood at the farther edge of the light, their shoulder-blades against the plasterless wall, and a can of beer gleamed between

them. In two open doors, on either side, stood women. They were quarrelling; everybody seemed to be quarrelling. It seemed the natural thing to do in that environment. Out of the medley thus produced came intelligible snatches.

“Pitch?” rumbled a fuzzy masculine voice above the can. “Why that guy couldn’t pitch pine.”

This was argument, the argument of base-ball controversy, as a long course in newspaper reading helped me unravel.

“Yes, and you keep your kids outa my house, too.” This in feminine falsetto; weary, married feminine.

“Outa your house?” An incredulous duplicate of the previous. “My heavings! Has my kids been in your house? Come here, Mabel; come here, Petey—and get fumigated quick!”

The storm rose suddenly 'til the words were mingled inextricably. Then a door opened in the greasy darkness, far back at the end of the hall. It seemed impossible that any one should be living there, for it was like a hole burrowed in the back wall of a cave; but behind the shape that nearly filled the doorway a gas jet revealed a table and a chair — there was a home back there. And the shape was the shape of a Man. He was so big that he never belonged in that trap at all; the poise of his head was too free; his voice rang too true to the Yankee twang.

“Shut up,” said he. And they shut up. “Keep this helling up any longer and I’ll come out there and break bones.” They were very still. “The baby’s

gettin' worse, that's why." Then he shut the door, and there was peace upon the scene.

In the wholesome silence that followed, I managed to make my query.

"Miss Arthur?"

"He means Miss Ruth. Third floor front, on the right, going up."

As I started forward dubiously I heard:

"Wonder what's his game?"

"Inspector, mebbe."

"Oh, Mamie! Hide the phonygraft."

I had reached the first step, going up, when a tiny boy, sitting alone in the darkness near the foot of the stairs, rose up and said in a tired voice, yet with something akin to eagerness in it:

"I'll show you up there, mister; I know where Miss Ruth lives."

In the darkness it was impossible to see much of him, save that he was very small and apparently old for his size. He went up slowly in the lead, mounting each step with difficulty, as if the lift was too much for him.

"Do you live here?"

His answer seemed strange in the Tenement. He said: "Yessir."

As we reached the second floor he pointed to the rear.

"That's where we live," he said. The door was open, and a big, red-faced woman was sitting inside.

"Do you know Miss—Miss Ruth?"

"Yessir," he said.

"What is your name?"

“Joey Bruggers,” said he, and kept toiling up.

The air was so thick and he was so small that I wondered he did not stifle. A white painted door marked the third floor front, right, going up, apart from its neighbours. To this the boy led, opened it without knocking and peeped in.

“Come in, Joey,” came in a voice which, in that medley of discords, was like a blessing; and I knew that we had found Ruth in. Said Joey, walking gravely in and seating himself in a corner, “Here’s a guy wants to see you, Miss Ruth.

At which a tall, freckled young man, with a violin case under one arm, and a young girl, with yellow hair, arose together from their chairs on the farther side of the room and together said: “Well, I guess we gotta be on our way, Miss Ruth.”

“You!” said Ruth, upon seeing me. “What are you doing over here?”

It was on my tongue to ask her the same question, but she held out her hand, and before that patient smile and the quiet blue eyes and the aura of faith that surrounded her, I stammered wretchedly; and I felt as an abashed scoffer might feel who has wandered by mistake into the temple.

“Yes, we gotta be going,” repeated the yellow-haired girl. But instead there were introductions all around.

“Della.” The girl greeted me with her head high up, her quick, unabashed eyes appraising me with a glance. She was small, and she came perilously near being beautiful. A pretty butterfly—no, a pretty little canary-bird,

who obviously longed for a chance to beat her wings against the bars.

“Freddy.” The young man ducked a head as nearly red as heads grow and grinned a grin that was made to win the hearts of men or dogs. In fact, his face was strangely uncertain in repose; it was made to be twisted amiably in that grin.

“Joey.” This was the shock. In the light he was even smaller than in the darkness of the hall. His head was sizes too big for his body. His face was terribly thin; but in it shone two great eyes with the clear, hungering look in them of those who are touched by God. And he lived on the second floor, rear, with the big woman of the red face.

We sat down, Della and Freddy on the edge of their chairs, as if sitting down were merely the final preparation for their going.

“We was just up giving old Mag a little cheer-up, anyway,” said Freddy.

“Sure.” Della fussed with the back of her wonderful pompadour. “We was only going to stay a second.”

They spoke to Ruth; I was present only as a restraint to conversation.

“I heard you was playing, Freddy,” piped Joey. “I was sitting down on the steps.”

That saved the situation; the tension fell.

“Why didn’t you come on up, Joey?” demanded Della. “You could of come up.”

“You know it, Joey.” Freddy winked at the little fellow in a way that forced even Joey’s tiny old face to

attempt a smile. "Any time Joey wants anything when I'm around, he knows all he's got to do is to ask, eh, kid? Joey'n me's old pals, ain't we, Joey? How'd you like that new tune of mine, kid? Know what I call it? 'Why Do They Blow the Whistle When I Ought to Be Sound Asleep?'"

Freddy himself bid for the laughter that followed, with his face one big grin. Joey did not laugh. He pondered gravely and said:

"Why do they, Freddy?"

But Della would have no more of this frivolity. Apparently she knew Freddy's weakness and was afraid that he would "make a fool of himself" if permitted to go on. She promptly turned the talk to serious matters, indicating by her manner that they *must* leave soon.

"You going to have a meeting in the park, Sat'day night, ain't you, Miss Ruth?"

"If nothing happens, dear."

"Me'n Freddy'll be there," said Della decisively. She said it without consulting Freddy.

"Wonder if old Rinehart'll have his spiel-fest at the corner again?" said he.

"Oh, sure," snapped Della. "You know how them guys are; they gotta talk or they can't live. And now with all this talk about cutting our wages down at the Fact'ry, and a strike, and all the row—Oh, he'll be there, all right. No need to ast. Well, come on now, Freddy; we gotta be going sure."

"Sure," said Freddy, rising obediently. "We was just going to stay a minute, anyway."

"Pleased to met you," said Della smartly. Freddy ducked his head and grinned. Joey, too, took his leave. The last sight we had of them was as they went down the stairs, Freddy in the middle, Della on his left arm, the violin case under his right, his right hand resting fraternally on Joey's little shoulder.

"Good heavens!" I said. "I thought the people who lived here were the ones who belonged here."

"Yes," said Ruth, smiling patiently as if this were a mistake one was expected to make. "And now what excuse have you to offer for straying so far from your true environment?"

I thought of my mission, and of what I had seen. I said: "I came to ask questions of you about these people, but I find I do not know what to ask."

Before that week came to an end, several things had happened. I had apologized profusely to a bewildered editor for foisting upon him a didactic article about something of which I was more densely ignorant than of the agricultural statistics of Finland, had resigned my position as special commissioner for the Society, saying that sometime I might know enough to write something about "those people over there," but not what the Society expected; and on Saturday afternoon I took possession of a thoroughly renovated room on the fourth floor, front, right, of the Tenement, and it looked as if I was going to be permitted to become acquainted with Clay Court, to the enlightenment of my benighted soul.

CHAPTER II

IT IS on this Saturday that our story really begins, for it is on Saturday night that things happen in Clay Court, and this was the Saturday that little Joey committed the Awful Crime.

I moved in at five. The room was everything that a room should not be for size, and, being under the roof, it was shamefully stunted for height; but it had a window looking squarely down the Court, and, for this, much was to be forgiven it. There were other compensations. Being four stories removed from the street level was one of them; and the view — ah, that view made up for all. Every window, every fire-escape, every inch of the street, and most of the roofs — were mine for the looking, and all from a strictly original point of view.

I threw up the window and leaned out. The walks and the street below were dotted out to the Avenue with crawling infants. Children just over the toddling age tended them. These made up the bulk of the people to be seen in the Court at this hour; the women were beginning odorous preparations for the evening meal, and all the others, it seems, were at work.

At five-thirty Ruth stood in the doorway with an invitation. It was her custom to walk down the Avenue to the Factory and meet Joey and Della as they came

from work. Would I care to come with her this evening? I hastily put off my attempt to become acquainted with the place I had decided to live in for awhile, and came. And by so doing we walked straight into the heart of the little drama which the next few days were to unfold.

The great brick barracks of the Consolidated Factory Company lay a mile down the Avenue from the Tenement, and in them most of our people over three feet high found employment. When the wind was from the east, we had the smoke from the Factory chimneys rolling over us in fat, black clouds; and, from the outside, the buildings had an uncomfortable way of giving out an impression of jail.

“Does Joey work in the Factory?” I asked, as we walked along. The Avenue was quiet, as the lull before the storm. The peddlers and fakirs were getting ready their displays; the beggars were uncovering such infirmities as they had to offer. They all increased in numbers as we neared the Factory, and all were waiting, ready to receive the swarm of home-goers that soon would break over the Avenue like a flood. And Joey’s eyes seemed out of place there.

“Yes,” said Ruth.

“And Della, too — in the Factory?”

“Yes. And Freddy, and most of the working people here, large and small. Saturday night is pay-night, so I like to go down and meet my little friends to-night especially.”

I had horrible visions of Joey and Della in the grasp of

burly ruffians and being forced to give up their meagre week's wage.

"No, no," said Ruth when I suggested this. "But pay-day means money, and money means drunkenness. I don't like to think of Joey or Della alone in it. Not that they are in danger, physically. But you understand?"

I felt that I did.

"I am thankful," continued Ruth, as we neared the Factory, "that you didn't ask the usual questions: 'Why do you bother about this place?' 'How in the world can you live here?' 'What do you expect to do here?' The worst of it is," she said with her slow smile, "I can't answer them to any one's satisfaction. I can only ask them to open their eyes and see."

"I, too, am blind and wofully ignorant," I said. "But give me credit for this: I never thought of asking those questions after last Monday night."

"You are credited," she said laughing. Then we came to the Factory.

And Joey, little Joey, had committed the Awful Crime. Being privileged characters we will step inside and take a first-hand view of his misdoing.

The scene is the much-too-dark and dusty finishing-room of the Consolidated Factory, the time nearing six of this fine Saturday in August; and Joey had looked at the clock!

One really must know something of the Factory to appreciate the complete depravity of Joey's action. No one must look at the clock before six in the Factory. At

six comes the end of the day's work. At that hour a whistle blows sullenly somewhere down in the dark regions near the engine-room, and somewhere in the same vicinity somebody moves a lever that shuts off the power. The big building, packed to the walls with machinery and humanity, answers the signal like a storm dying in full flight. The dizzy whirling of hundreds of wheels stops; the strident note of the machinery drops gradually to a droning key. Belts move slowly from pulley to pulley, listlessly flapping together as they complete their final journeys for the day; and, finally, with many creaks and groans, as if protesting against the cessation of easy, humming motion, the wheels make their last revolutions, stop, and grow still. And then, and not until then, the flesh and blood beings who tend the machines give vent to a sigh of escape. Slowly and carefully they straighten their bent backs. Slowly, and with an expression in which incredulity liberally mingles with the sense of relief, they look around. It is six. The day is over. They are free to go home; but it is hard to believe that the end has come after one has resolved that the day will last forever.

And then, also, one may look at the clock.

But Joey was tired. He was always tired. He was so small that he could just rest his chin on an ordinary table, and his shoulders hung in front of his chest like two round bone-knobs. His face looked something like the face of an old man who doesn't get enough to eat, but, as if to make up for all this, his eyes were two of the brightest that ever shone in a child's head. The flesh might grow

weary under the steady strain of work, but those eyes gleamed always with a light that belonged not in that weary Factory.

The work was hard. It came pouring on to the table between Della's and Freddy's machines. Joey's Two-fifty a week depended solely upon his ability to keep the table cleared, so the machines would not be stopped or delayed in the furious pace which the power set for them. Sometimes Joey's legs gave out; and then he had hit upon an ingenious scheme to save himself. Leaning forward on the waist-high table, he rested the middle portion of his little body upon its edge, thus taking most of his weight off the wabbly legs. It was hard on the stomach, of course, but time and again the scheme had saved the day.

To-day, being Saturday, was worse than ever. The scheme had been tried often throughout the day, and still the legs refused to hold up as they should. Little by little Joey felt them giving way. His mouth was drawn out of shape in the corners, from chewing his lips to keep from crying; his little old face was covered with a coating of brown dust that the tired hands could not wipe away; and Joey, looking for the coming of six as the shipwrecked sailor looks for land, paused for an instant in his steady task and looked at the clock.

“Gee!” he muttered as he noted that the hands showed many minutes from six. His eyes moved appealingly from the clock up to the ceiling. Up there in the murky dusk the shafting continued its dizzy whirl, and the belts sang from pulley to pulley as if they would never stop.

“Aw!” whined Joey. “Won’t it ever be six?”

That was all; but that was enough. He had looked at the clock!

“The little villain!” The Superintendent got down from his spying perch on the other side of the room, his eyes ablaze and his big under-lip fairly quivering with righteous indignation. “What thieves they are!” he thought as he started down the aisle. “How a man’s got to watch them to keep them up to snuff!”

Keeping his work people up to snuff was this Superintendent’s specialty, and having only the other day turned a woman into the street, because he had discovered that she was too sick and feeble to keep up to the required speed, he was particularly pleased at the opportunity offered him by Joey’s conduct. Here was another chance to demonstrate his eternal vigilance. Surely the Directors soon must take notice of the way he handled help.

Behind the now frantically hurrying Joey the great man stopped. He smiled a small smile of great self-satisfaction, and stood for a moment studying the thin back as it moved to and fro, fro and to, under the ceaseless call of the work.

“Hmm!” said the Superintendent suddenly.

Joey, for some reason that would have been hidden to a stranger, jumped as if he had been struck. But he did not stop or turn around. Another pause. Joey’s legs began to tremble.

“Hmm!” repeated the Superintendent. Then, deliberately, his big hand fell upon one of Joey’s shoulders, the big fingers took a firm hold on the round, bony knob, and

slowly the shoulder was twisted around until Joey, trembling like a rabbit in a trap, was forced to face the Superintendent.

“Young man” — the voice was terrible, but the glaring eyes were worse — “young man, don’t you need your job?”

“Oh, yessir,” stammered Joey.

“Don’t you care to work here any longer?” There was fine sarcasm in the accent that the Superintendent put upon the “here.”

“Yessir. I—I—”

“Do you know the rules?”

Joey gulped and nodded guiltily.

“And yet — ” the great voice of the Superintendent rose to a roar — “and yet, you little rascal, you looked at the clock!”

A tremor ran through all who heard. Now they realized for the first time the truly heinous qualities of Joey’s crime. He had looked at the clock! It was not six! Nothing more need be said. They waited to hear the verdict.

It came in the form of a surprise. The Superintendent merely turned Joey around so he again faced the table, pushed him roughly against it, and said: “Next time, out you go. Now speed along and catch up your work, you little loafer!”

And with this the Superintendent passed down the aisle, while behind him Joey tore wildly at his work, sick from the shock, but happy because he had not been “fired.” And all around there was a strange atmosphere, an atmosphere that might fit around nothing so well as the scene of an interrupted execution.

CHAPTER III

DON'T you care, Joey."

Della was first to recover courage and speak.

Della usually did speak first as well as last, when the occasion required. Even in factory garb Della was very pretty; her little red lips being rather too full for her white face, and her light blue eyes too much like the eyes of a china doll to win her the title of beautiful. The eyes had done the work for Freddy, however, and the tall and thin, freckled, and grinning fellow hovered about her in a way that Della pretended to despise. She couldn't do anything else; it isn't proper in the district to show a fellow that he stands high in your opinion.

Freddy was a person of some importance. As a gentleman who played the violin in such startling and original fashion as to have won him a certain degree of fame among the cheaper variety theatres, he was some one to look up to in the Factory. He practised whenever he wasn't calling on Della when the day's work was over. Some day, said Freddy, his name would be on the bills; at which Della would toss her head and sniff in false contempt.

"Don't you care?" Della's cheering voice came rattling through the clatter of the machines, for the machines did not pause for the convenience of conversation.

"When he just talks you're all right. Cheer up. Six o'clock soon. Ain't so, Freddy — or don't you know that, either?"

"Cheer up is right, Joey," said Freddy, performing his wonderful feat of wriggling his scalp, ears, and all. "As her leddyship says:

"Six o'clock will soon be here,
Oh, hear the whistles blow!"

"Get out!" A supercilious raising of the upper lip by Della. "You and your funny work. I suppose you'd do a song and dance at your own funeral."

"I might if I was asked, yer leddyship."

"Come off!"

"But I don't see anybody wearing any wooden over-coats around here."

Although Freddy's words were full of leisure and banter, there was no hitch in the fierce speed of the machines.

"No. Nobody dead." Della's sarcasm, too, crept through the clatter. "World ain't come to an end yet, either, has it? But with the Supe throwing the boots into Joey, and the big row staring us in the face ——"

Ah! She bit her tongue. She had forgotton. They must not discuss the Dread Subject before Joey. He had enough to stand without worrying about that, poor kid.

But Joey had heard and understood, for the subject was on the tongues of all, inspiring an atmosphere of dread throughout the Factory.

"Will there be a row, and will they lay us off, as some say, Freddy?" he piped.

"Don't know, Joey."

"I heard some men talking at noon. They said they were going to cut our pay. That right?"

"Don't know. Talk's cheap, Joey. Everybody's talking. They act like they knew it all, and all they've been doing is sucking in the gas that Rinehart hands out up at the corner nights."

"But will they cut our pay, d'you think?" asked Della anxiously. She looked concerned, and the effect spoiled the pretty red mouth.

"I don't know," replied Freddy, curtly. "Ain't I telling you nobody knows. Rinehart's the boy to wise you up. He'll dish out the gas up at the corner again to-night, I s'pose." He waited a moment, straightened himself on his stool, and then delivered himself of this portentous remark: "As for me, know all men by these presents that I ain't worrying."

"Hah?" Della flashed a look from the china-doll eyes that frankly admitted the proportions of the surprise that Freddy's words had wrought.

"I ain't worrying."

"You ain't?"

"Nope."

Della flashed over three or four looks of shrewd investigation, but Freddy was serious, or, at least, as nearly serious as that merry young man could be on such short notice.

"Why ain't you worrying? Everybody else is. It's got the place half crazy."

“Because I don’t have to, that’s why.” Freddy wriggled his ears. Evidently something was up.

“You don’t have to worry about whether there’s a cut in our pay, or whether there’s a strike, or anything?”

Words cannot express the amazement and incredulity which were expressed in Della’s broken speech. Not to worry about one’s pay? Not to worry about the chance to work? Surely there was no such condition in all this world!

“Wait, only wait, yer leddyship,” retorted Freddy in the sepulchral tones of West Side melodrama. “To-night—to-ni-yut you shall know all.”

“Ah, cut it out. You think you’re too wise.”

“Not a bit.” Freddy resumed his normal tone of voice. “It’s the Gawd’s truth, Della, and you don’t have to worry either.”

But that was too much for Della, and she broke into a little bitter laughter, her under-lip trembling as she remarked casually that it wasn’t funny to make fun of a pal like that.

“No kidding, Della. You’ll see to-night,” said Freddy.

“I suppose,” said Della scornfully, “that you’ve made such a hit with your fiddling that you can quit work and retire?”

But Freddy only wriggled his ears.

“To-night, to-ni-yut,” he repeated, “you shall know all. We go to a show, you and me, to-night, understand? We scramble into two orchestra chairs down near the

front of the Imperial. And there, right then and there, yer leddyship, I'll—I'll slip you some big news."

"Orchestra chairs! You can't afford it, and you know I know you can't. What's the use of dreaming?"

"Ssh! Not a word to mother. I got two passes."

"Yes, you have." Della persisted in being a little cynic. "Where from?"

"Ah! That's part of the fatal secret, to be continued in our next. But, anyhow, we go, don't we?"

"Sure," said Della, her eager nod hinting at what the treat meant to her. Then, "O-oh, say!" she cried, "I forgot. I promised Miss Ruth to go with her to her meeting in the Park this evening, and — oh, say; it's too bad, ain't it?"

"Miss Ruth?" repeated Freddy with great respect. "Well, if you promised her —"

"Don't think for a minute I don't want to do it." Della instantly was all afire. "Don't think I don't like to hear Miss Ruth talk, because I love it. Yes, I love it, honest. She jerked me up all right. I certainly was something fierce until I met her, and goodness knows what I might have come to. When she begins to talk to you it's like — like —"

"I know." Freddy searched his soul for the accurate phrase. "Like Sunday morning after a bath at the barber shop, and the bells ringing up the Avenue."

"Something like that." Della was silent for awhile. The machines ran on.

"They got a swell show down at the Imperial this week," said Freddy, casually. Della's eyes glistened.

"Well," she said, yielding grudgingly to temptation.
"Passes won't keep, will they?"

"Nit," said Freddy.

"Well," sighed Della, "I suppose Miss Ruth'll have other meetings."

"Sure, said Freddy. "And to-night's a big night for us."

"Shut up," warned Della. "The Supe's coming back this way."

The machines clattered on. The weary hands moved to and fro. It grew darker. The air grew warmer. It was like the air of a vault — dead, sickening. And little Joey, between pondering on the problem of the possible wage-cut, wondered if he would last out the day.

But all things must have an end, even a factory Saturday afternoon. In spite of Joey's growing disbelief in such an eventuality, the whistle finally gave the welcome signal, and Joey leaned forward and rested heavily against the table. Freddy promptly leaped off his stool and made for the wash room, and Della promptly fussed with her back hair.

"See?" she said triumphantly. "What'd I tell you, Joey? Six o'clock always comes. S'pose Miss Ruth'll come to see us home?"

"I don't know." Joey was feeling bad. Even this name, at which ordinarily his great eyes would have shone with delight, failed to rouse him.

"I guess she will all right," continued Della, diving under the table for her hat, which lay there covered by a newspaper. "Ain't she the grandest ever, though?"

Think of anybody who could be riding around in ottos bothering about us! Wouldn't catch me doing it; I tell you those."

The paper was off the hat now, and the hat was being pinned on the light hair. Joey still leaned against the table.

"Get your cap and—why —why, what's the matter, Joey? What's matter witchou?"

Joey was leaning farther over the table. His face could be no whiter than usual, but it was plain that something more than usual was wrong.

"I donno," he said, and slid into a queer little bundle on the floor.

"Why, Joey!" cried Della, shocked at such conduct. Then in alarm: "Here, here! Look here. Joey's gone and fainted dead away!"

In the eager hurry of all to get out of the Factory in the shortest time possible, the cry failed to arouse any great excitement. A group of half a dozen gathered around, jostling one another for a better view of the little white face, proffering several kinds of advice, and calling for water with great enthusiasm. Della took one of the limp hands between her own and proceeded to rub it aimlessly, and after awhile somebody brought the water. Under these ministrations Joey began to betray feeble signs of life, but his eyes failed to open, and the group grew hushed in alarm. Fainting was nothing out of the ordinary in the Factory, but this looked like something worse.

"What shall we do? What shall we do?" cried Della.

And instantly she answered her own question. "Somebody run and see if Miss Ruth is waiting outside."

But there was no need for this, for one of the girls called: "Here she is now," and the circle opened up and Ruth came hurrying to Joey's side. And the girls forgot about Joey and began to study the vision.

"Oh, Miss Ruth!" cried Della. "How good you come! Here I was pinning on my hat, and all of a sudden down goes Joey, and we've soused him with water and everything and he don't come to."

The vision knelt down. She lifted Joey's head to her arm and wiped the dust from his water-streaked face. She lifted him in her arms, and started down the aisle. Her lips were set tightly.

"Bring his cap, please, Della, and ring up his time," she called.

Near the door she met the Superintendent.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"Nothing," said Ruth. "It was after Six when he fainted."

CHAPTER IV

RUTH came out and seated herself on the Factory steps with Joey on her lap. This sort of thing was new to me; what was the proper thing to do?

“Let me hold him,” I said lamely. “He is too heavy for you.”

“Too heavy! Look!” She drew the collar down from Joey’s neck and opened his shirt. I looked once, then I am afraid I looked away. Much newspaper work, some roughing it, and a little big game shooting has, I believe, left me with at least as little squeamishness as the average man. I had seen these things before, too, but never in one that I knew. It makes a difference. I stood helpless.

Joey lay as if sleeping. His head hung limply over his shoulder, and his breath came in hungry little gulps — gulps that lifted the breastbone and ribs till they seemed ready to burst the skin. He did not move. And the out-going crowd rushed past with scarcely a look. Kid dropped in the shops? Ought to be glad he wasn’t dead.

The Factory emptied itself. The tumult of home-going died down from a crazy roar to a steady murmur. Twilight began to come on in the smoky cross street. Joey lay as if sleeping in Ruth’s arms.

I was able to utter the conventional thought now.

"We must have a doctor, mustn't we? Where can I find one?"

Ruth shook her head. "It isn't worth while. He will be able to go home soon."

"But he's really ill, isn't he?"

Faith, he looked more than ill.

"Only a faint. Call it what you please. It's common over here. He will be able to walk soon."

Here Joey stirred and opened his eyes, looking around with that puzzled expression peculiar to returning consciousness.

"Feeling better, Joey?"

"Yes'm."

"Do you feel strong enough to walk?"

"No'm."

Joey's eyes closed again, but presently he sat up and laid a hand on his stomach.

"It's here, Miss Ruth."

"What is it, Joey?"

"Nothing." Which, considering that Joey that day, as many others, had gone without his luncheon, probably was an accurate diagnosis of the case. Noticing that he was on Ruth's lap the boy scrambled up on his shaking legs.

"I'm all right," he said stoutly. But he wasn't. He took two steps down the stairs and promptly collapsed.

"Wait a little, Joey. There's no hurry. Wait until you're stronger."

"Yes'm." He was quite satisfied to sit down where he was. He had found that his legs still lacked strength

to be proper articles to walk on. So he curled up and waited.

Ruth sat in a silence that suggested complete abstraction. She had dropped her chin in her hands, and her great eyes looked mournfully out into the barren street and saw nothing, as the eyes of one who dreams. There was pain in her eyes now, and in the firm little mouth, pain and wonder, for she, too, was not yet accustomed to the ways of the life about her. And she was too tender, too much a vessel of emotion to hide the workings of her pitying heart.

The street grew empty and darker. Presently Ruth began to speak, her voice little more than a passionate whisper, the words rolling from her tongue with no perceptible effort, her eyes still looking unseeingly into the gathering gloom around us.

“Joey fainted at his work. He is too weak to work. He doesn’t get enough to eat. Yet he must work or starve. So he works, and drops at his bench. . . . Can the thing really be true in this great, rich city?”

She paused and her breath came in like a sob. She wanted no answer, and I made none. After awhile she went on as before.

“They are talking of a wage-cut in this Factory. Think of it! Joey’s wages can’t buy him enough to eat. ‘Here,’ says the world, ‘are some helpless ones; let us take advantage of them, because they are helpless. They have no champions, no ministers to take their part, they can make no defence. We will load on them the burdens which we would not dare to load on those who are not

helpless. We will do as we please with them, because we can.' Isn't it strange conduct in a world that professes to have accepted Jesus Christ?"

Her words ceased abruptly and there was silence. A steamer whistled hoarsely down in the river. Joey arose and looked up inquiringly. And his thin neck showed plainly what ailed him.

"How can that be?" whispered Ruth. "Surely there is plenty of food in this world — at least in this country?"

There was, certainly there was.

"Well, can't the world see that Joey hasn't had his share? Are people blind? Is the world blind? Does it know what it does to the helpless?"

"It doesn't appreciate — as you do. It wouldn't sleep well if it did," I suggested.

"No. If it knew — there would be an end to it. And we who have seen, we must tell the others and make them see. Oh, John! I feel that I must do what little I can. I am driven to it. This crisis over the wage-cut is a crime — a crime! I will beg and plead with the world for it to open its eyes and see. And it must see. Good is dominant in man. He does not know how unfair he is — that is all. When he hears, when he knows, and sees, and understands — all these things will change. They will, I know they will."

It grew quiet in the cross street. Out on the Avenue the feet of the home-going army sent up their steady murmur. Joey stood still and looked up at Ruth's face, and in his eyes there was something of the dumb hunger that is in the eyes of a faithful dog when he looks into

his master's eyes and wishes to speak and to be understood. I said: "You are going to speak to these people in the Park to-night, aren't you?"

"Yes." She arose and stretched out a hand to Joey. The dreamer vanished with that movement, and she was again the practical, deft-handed helper.

"Feeling stronger, Joey?"

"Sure. I'm all right."

He took a few steps to prove it. This time the legs held up.

Ruth took him by one hand.

"We will go home, then," she said.

It was a new experience. I took him by the other hand — oh, my masters, what a hand!

"We'll all go home together," I said.

"Gee!" said Joey, gripping feebly. "That'll be swell."

Westward into the Avenue we went, that great thoroughfare which, like a giant sword-cut slits the district in two, and through which each evening passes a sullen, defeated army, the army of the workers going home.

It was lighter out there in the Avenue. The sun, a blood-red wafer in the distant smoke haze, hung at its end like a lantern at the mouth of a tunnel. But all the heavens and all the universe seemed filled with a jumbled pall of greasy gray smoke, through which the light of day filtered down to the city, not as daylight, but as illumination from some great sulphurous lamp. Yes, it was lighter in the Avenue, but it was not a light to cheer.

And in this light the army was going home. The greater part of its numbers had passed, for it was late, and

the stragglers remained, the halt, the weak, the excessively weary and unfortunate; but even these were an army in numbers. And like an army they moved, a broken army, hopelessly wriggling its way up the Avenue, one idea dominating it, one desire drawing it to a common goal: to get home and feed. Beyond this—nothing. The dragging feet beat a certain rhythm; but the motif was not nice to hear.

In that smoky light all things were dirty to the eye, and this very murkiness seemed to make certain things stand out which might not have been striking in the light of day. Seen in the gloomy light, the weariness of flesh and bone and soul was all too evident. The emptiness of the faces cried out as faces from some master-painter's brush, for here and at this time one could not fail to note the tale that rode in the stream of countenances, the tale of all things missing save the spark of life.

White, weary faces. The white skin hugs the ill-formed bone, following the contour closely for want of a red meat cushion between. The eyes—eyes drunk with the unconscious pleading of dying souls, eyes as hopeless as the blank eyes of the dead, or worse. The dragging bodies, hopelessly dragging, dragging on. And the curses, the lack of hope, everywhere apparent.

For there was none here to whom life had been, was, or promised to be, a thing of pleasure. The game was too serious, the rules too strict, the penalty for losing too awful, the reward too small, to make the playing of it any fun. One might have wondered why these hopeless ones saw fit to play at all.

This is what one may see in the smoky Avenue at this time in the evening if he cares to look. It was appalling, it was too big. I told Ruth so.

“Can’t you hear the song?” She was looking far away toward the setting sun where the head of the straggling army lost itself somewhere in the coming night.

“The song?”

“The song of hope. A tiny song; but can’t you hear it in the roar of hopelessness?”

“Can you really hear it?” The time and the place had me, too, in its grip, for the scene is one of awe.

“Distinctly. It is a song of brotherhood. Hear the rhythm of those hundreds of feet! Hear their beat upon the walk! Can’t you hear that note? All one, one flesh, one blood, one family; alike in joy, and hope, and sorrow; brothers and sisters in humanity! It’s there, John, it’s there! I can hear it; and all that it needs is a tongue to utter it and make us understand. Brotherhood! It is there. Surely, John, you can’t fail to hear it?”

I tried hard to follow her and failed.

“I don’t hear anything of the sort,” I said.

“Your ears are deaf from the din of down town.”

“Perhaps. They — ah!”

Clay Court was before us, and a few steps down the Court a small man stood on a soap box and talked to a crowd; and the crowd swore back its approval.

“Is this, too, part of the song?” I asked.

“Even this,” said Ruth. “It is God stirring in the hearts of men that makes them discontented.”

CHAPTER V

THE man on the box was Rinehart. He was a yellow little man with little wild eyes that showed too much of the whites, and a voice that seemed to shriek, even in a whisper. Under the stress of excitement, which was whenever he spoke, he trembled from head to finger tips, like the vibration of an over-engined boat. He was our prophet, and he had been educating Clay Court ever since the Presidential campaign had begun.

His teaching was awful.

“Bloody Murder,” the young men called him. But after all he was as inevitable then and there on that soap box as the rumble of thunder in the gathering clouds of a storm. He was our safety-valve, and during these hot, excited weeks a safety-valve was of all things what we needed. Rinehart told us what we wanted to hear, what we would have said had we had his tongue. A safety-valve? Nay, more than that, greater than that! Rinehart was an epic poet, viciously chanting the bitter song that brewed in the hearts of men day by day.

He used to shift his box from one side of the Court to the other. One evening he was on the side before the refreshment establishment of Mr. Mehaffey; the next he was across the street, bringing his enthralled hearers

within the glare of the lights of Mr. Sodders. The two saloons stood like sentinels at a lodge gate to the Court. On the west the ornate place of Mehaffey, with this sign over the side door:

LADIES CAN MAKE THEIR PURCHASES HERE

On the east:

SODDERS, THE BIGGEST BEER ON THE WEST SIDE,
BAR NONE

And on a good hot day the odour of stale beer swept forth into the street from the door of each place, met half-way, and established a rich, fat barrier which one must penetrate to enter Clay Court. At night the saloon lights helped out the single gas lamp in its unequal struggle against the sooty gloom. There was only one other night light beside these — the lamp sign in the basement of the Tenement:

MRS. O. HANSEN, MIDWIFE

So perhaps it was only a desire for light that prompted Rinehart to speak at the corners.

He was a wizard. Promptly at eight he would step forth from some hidden corner, an old disciple would produce the box, Rinehart would mount it, and five minutes later the men let their pipes go out while they listened. But he had outdone himself to-night. He

had caught his crowd going home. It was a triumph. They were hurrying hunger driven to the evening food, and he stopped them. He held them. They forgot the emptiness in the belly, they forgot the food. Rinehart was feeding them stronger stuff, and in these days these men were growing ravenous for something beside mere food. For food without hope is a useless diet for man.

We must listen to Rinehart as he pours out the fires of his soul this warm Saturday evening. He is wordy and he is wild, but he was the tongue of the people with whom we are dealing. Others felt; Rinehart thought and put it in harsh, hot words. And he was at his best, or worst, as we sent Joey on to the Tenement and stepped into a hallway to listen. His eyes gleamed with a hint of the power of the devils that drove him, and there was a fleck of white foam in each corner of his mouth.

“And this year,” Rinehart was saying, “they’re going to do two things to you; they’re going to elect a President to boss you, and they’re going to cut your wages. What? You think you’ve got anything to say about this election that’s coming on? Well, let me tell you that you haven’t, not any more than you have about your wages. They fix it up for you; they elect him; they pick him out — both parties — and you vote for him, and they win no matter who’s elected.”

He exploded a series of gestures indicative of severe contempt.

“You — why, they don’t know you’re living. You keep so quiet, and take your medicine so much as if you liked it that they forget you’re alive. Why, if

you was to go up to the President and say: 'Here, Mr. President, I voted for you, and you ought to do something to make 'em stop this wage-cut, he'd look you over and say: 'Who the hell are you? A working man? Why, the gall of you! Ain't you getting wages? Ain't you living? What more d'you want? Go on. Get to hell out of here back to where you belong.' That's what he'd say. And you got to get, too, because you haven't got anything to say about it."

As usual, he began to tremble now, legs, hands, head, voice, quivering with the fires that drove him.

"Oh, we're a fine bunch of suckers! Ain't we men? Ain't we got heads, and arms, and hands? Sure, we have. Then what right has another man got to kick us around? What right? It ain't the right of might, because we've got the might, if we want to use it. Yes-sir; you've got the might. You've got the numbers. Right here in the grip of your good right fist you've got the power to make the other fellow take his feet off your neck and turn white and run. You've got the strength to change yourself from the worm to the boss. You've got the strength, brothers, you've got the strength — if you'd only use it!"

He drove his fist against his forearm to indicate how strength might be used.

"Just stop and think it over for awhile, fellows; see what it means. Here you're going along like a lot of whipped dogs, taking whatever the boss slips you, and glad to get it. The other fellow looks you over, we'll say, and he thinks you're getting too strong for his good —

thinks you're getting wages enough to make you half-way independent, we'll say. What happens? He shuts up his fist and squeezes the heart out of you, with a cut, and you're good and helpless for a long while again. And at the same time you're the strongest. You could pick these bosses of yours off their feet and hold 'em up in your two good hands and say, 'Whistle for me or I'll break you in two.' You're the master, if you want to be; but you let them run you into the dirt without a word.

"Why, fellows, it's like some great big six-footer with a big arm and hair on his chest letting a little five-foot-two rat in spectacles run him. The big guy — that's you — makes something — brings something into this world with his skill and strength — wagon wheel spokes, we'll say — and the little fellow takes 'em away, sells them, and hands the fellow who made them — you, remember — enough to live on — so he can keep on making more spokes. Big guy keeps on working; little guy gets rich on the product. Whenever he feels that his slave is getting fresh, or beginning to think for himself, he hands him a slap in the face and says, 'Cut it out, now; or I'll fire you and won't let you make any more spokes for me to get rich on.' And that's just about what the situation is between labour — the men who do the work — and capital — which gets all the benefit.

"Ain't it a fine situation for men to submit to? Why, now, just to show you how you stand right here this very day; you're fine examples right now. You had your wages cut last winter, didn't you? How much were you

getting before that cut? Enough to live on decently? Hah? No. Enough to exist on? Sure. Just enough to exist on — no more. What were they getting — the Company? Hah? Well, I don't know, because I ain't used to figuring in millions, but I know that Warman, the president, spent four million on his new place out near Lake Forest, and his youngest kid got delirium tremens in New York. Too much champagne, while your kids were dying of rotten milk. But you had to stand the cut, just the same; they didn't need the 5 per cent. they took off, but they *wanted* it; and they knew right where to go for it without making any trouble. So they cut your wages; they soaked the fellow who didn't have guts enough to make the come-back."

He paused for breath but was at it again before the spell lifted.

"Well, that left you how much? How much? How much you getting now? Enough to live on? Answer: are you?"

"No," growled a surly voice. "No, no," grumbled others and there was an uneasy clearing of throats.

"No. No! Not enough to live on. Just enough — just enough to keep you alive — and now what next?"

Rinehart stopped dead short and sneered in their faces.

"Why what d'you expect? What can you expect so long as you stand for all they hand you? — Another cut, of course. Another cut — on top of the others. Another cut into the wages that give you only enough to keep the breath of life in your bodies! Another cut into the bread

and potatoes and meat you put into the mouths of your kids! Another cut into your lives!—Because— you stand for it.”

His voice had risen to a shriek, a cry almost wild animal like, and suddenly it subsided. The sneer came back to his face. He had placed them on trial. What would they say in reply? What could they say? “Well they ain’t made the cut yet,” said a surly young man.

“No,” Rinehart nodded gravely. “They hain’t made it yet. You’re still living.”

“Maybe it’s all talk. Maybe they won’t do it. How d’you know?”

The young man did not relish being laughed at.

“Maybe the last one was all talk, too. Maybe it was; look in your pay envelope and see.”

That told. They knew from experience that the talk preceded the actual event. They were breathing hard. Rinehart singled them out with his snapping eyes, one after another, accusing them as individuals. Then, with a wild sweep of his arm above them:

“What fools we are, brothers! How long are we going to stand it? How long are we going to wait like sheep until the knife hits us? Haven’t we heard that there’s a ‘contemplated cut?’ What does that mean? Hah? It means that they sat down and talked it over and said, ‘Will they stand for it?’ They’re kind of surprised themselves at your easiness, you know, and they don’t know how much farther they dare push you. ‘Sure,’ they figure, ‘they’ve always stood for it before. They don’t

know any better, and they can't help themselves if they did.' And in a few days you'll get the word: 'Owing to business depression because of the election — another cut in wages.' And then — then what — are — you — going — to — do? What are you going to do?"

He stopped with a snap, clicking his thin lips together like scissors. He looked around at them again. Inwardly he smiled; he saw that he had struck home. Outwardly he maintained his tense, agonized expression.

"You can't stand it much longer," he said in a low, confidential tone. "And you won't. It's got to be too heavy for you, and you're going to shake it off. The time is ripe now; this is the year to do it in. You can't elect a President, but you can make the men who do elect him understand that you're Boss. And there's only one way to do it" — he was back in the old fierce mood again — "only one way to get yourself a square deal in this land of the free and the home of the brave — make the whole country damn good and afraid of you!"

"You've tried begging. You've been the sucker long enough. Now it's time to turn things over. Nobody is afraid of a fellow until they feel his muscle. Let them see yours. Let them see that you could knock over all these millionaires and big guns, and the President himself, like so many mud dolls. Show them that they're on top only because you let them be, and if you get mad you can dump 'em over. Show them that while they're riding on your shoulders they mustn't bear down too hard or you'll shake 'em off. Don't you suppose that would make a change in the way they treat you? Don't

you suppose — if you showed them that — that they'd think a long time before voting themselves more profits out of your wages? Well, I guess they would. Why, you'd have them taking you into consideration when they made their big moves, then. In other words, you wouldn't be slaves, which is just what you are now."

Such was the gentle little way of Rinehart. This was his favourite ending. A stinging slap across the face — "slaves!" — then he would step down, the old disciple would gather to him the box, and together they would disappear behind the swinging doors of Mr. Mehaffey's or Mr. Sodders's, leaving the crowd behind dazed and dumbed by the verbal explosion. Rinehart had done it so many times that he was shocked when he turned and found himself face to face with a man who held up a hand and said: "Stay on your perch just a minute, you; I want to ask one question."

The man was a giant. The tufts of hair in his ears and nostrils were black from the engine-room. There was a steadfast solemnness on his face as if he hadn't smiled for years. With his size, his bearing, and the tones of his voice, he suggested some great outdoor creature who had been trapped and held prisoner in the Tenement. He was distinctly out of place. It was the man who had brought silence to the Tenement hall last Monday evening.

"What," continued the giant, "what are you going to do about it?"

Rinehart leaned forward eagerly.

"Come to the meeting in the basement at ten

to-morrow morning, Mr. Perkins," he hissed. "Come with us. You'll learn that we are going to do something, and you'll learn what it is."

Perkins turned away, apparently satisfied. Rinehart got down from his box, and he and the old disciple disappeared. The crowd dispersed.

"What does it all mean?" It all was bewildering to me.

"The song is stirring them," said Ruth, "but they've never learned how to sing."

We turned toward the Tenement. Although it was early evening when, at this season of the year, the world normally is light and pleasant, the Court, being walled in on three sides by buildings and up above by the cloud of smoky haze, had grown so dark that already lights were showing in the Tenement, gleaming behind greasy panes, like gas lamps in a foggy night. And the babel of Saturday evening was upon the place, for Saturday is pay-day in the Factory, and the Tenement had begun to boil. Housewives were hurrying to buy food with the newly arrived money; kids were hurrying after beer. One might have laughed, but the wailing of a babe persisted in reaching the ear through all the turmoil.

"The Perkins baby," said Ruth. "The doctor has given it up."

An Early Drunk began to carol blithely; the Court was livening up. But Ruth was right; it had not learned to sing.

CHAPTER VI

WE ARE back home in the Tenement at last, and we will follow Joey to his home; for they were waiting at home for Joey, waiting for him with longing hearts.

What spectacle so sure to touch the heart and stir it to warmer and greater beating as that of an anxious mother eagerly awaiting the return of her little son from his day's labours? What so doubly touching as the thought of the father, as well, sitting beside his spouse as they look at the clock, then at each other, mutually anxious because the little son is late? Natural maternal anxiety, stern fatherly solicitude; truly the picture is one to arouse good feelings on the part of all who behold.

And this was the situation with our little Joey on this particular Saturday night.

The Bruggers lived in two rooms and a closet at the end of the second-floor hall, and Mrs. Bruggers had a way of leaving the door open while discussing the innermost secrets of family life that made it no trouble at all to know all about the Bruggers. Their joys and sorrows were an open book, or, rather, an open phonograph, to all the Tenement. And do not fancy that there is no joy in life lived in two rooms and a closet at the end of a dark hall. There is. It was a treat not soon to be forgotten

to hear Mr. Bruggers pipe up and sing, "When You And I Were Young, Maggie," after the can had made a sufficient number of trips to the corner.

But there was no joy in the household to-night. In the room which served as kitchen and living room Mr. and Mrs. Bruggers sat with expectant but mournful eyes and ears. The table, containing what remained of a rather scanty supper, was between them, and they faced the door. Bruggers, his thin legs crossed, and elbow on the table, leaned his little head upon his hand, and gazed at the entrance in pensive, dreamy expectation. He was a thin, little man all around, with a high forehead which, by virtue of almost complete baldness, seemed to run back to his neck, and no chin. His nose was red, very red; his mouth was a smirk that reached from one side of the thin face to the other; while scattered irregularly over the lower part of his countenance were tufts of woolly black hair which Bruggers flatteringly referred to as a beard.

Mrs. Bruggers on the other side of the table was builded on different lines. She was as full-bodied as Bruggers was thin. She filled her red wrapper to the point of bursting and even beyond, for beneath each of the lady's armpits a sharp rent appeared in the seams through which loose red flesh protruded in a way distinctly suggestive of overstuffed. The redness that was upon Bruggers's nose was all over the face of his spouse, a face which, moreover, was more than life size, whether through a strange puffiness that marked it, or from natural construction, would have been hard to say. It's expression

now, and always when in a normal condition, was that of a scowl amounting to a direct threat; the whole attitude of Mrs. Bruggers at this moment, which was one of bold uprightness, the hands on the hips, the big head to one side, while the eyes watched the door with something of the same expression of the cat at the mouse hole, bore out this impression. Mr. and Mrs. Bruggers were awaiting their child's home-coming on a Saturday night.

Though there was no clock in the room, they knew that Joey's regular time of arrival had come and passed. This, apparently, was the cause of their concentration in waiting. At times Bruggers cast a glance at a little shelf above the table. The shelf was empty. Bruggers smiled and resumed his watching, indulging himself, as was to be seen by his expression, in the joys of reminiscence and anticipation, in lieu of anything more substantial.

"Bruggers." The voice came out of the corner of Mrs. Bruggers's mouth, that energetic body not deigning to direct her gaze in the direction of her speech.

"Yes, my love?" Bruggers was all attention.

"What d'you s'pose the brat's doing?"

"I can't imagine, my dear."

"Aw, you can't anything."

"My dear —"

"Shut up."

Bruggers obeyed, smiling indulgently after the manner of masterful man humouring an irritable helpmeet. Minutes passed.

"Bruggers."

“My dear.”

“Get the can.”

“Why, my love?”

“Get it. He’s coming. He’s here.”

It was true. The more vigilant ears of the woman had detected Joey’s steps in the hall, and at the moment when Bruggers was arising to obey his spouse’s command, the boy opened the door and entered his home.

Immediately he had crossed the threshold, Joey stopped and his bright eyes ran from one to the other of the two faces that had awaited his coming with such eagerness. The door he left open behind him. This was strategy, strategy born of much experience. But there was another strategist in that room, an older strategist, a more experienced strategist, and, therefore, a more capable one. Bruggers, divining the possible purpose of the open door, innocently proceeded to carry from the table to the sink, as if for the improbable purpose of cleansing, a large tin pail. The sink was near the door. Suddenly Bruggers moved with a swiftness that was remarkable in one of his apparent lack of energy. The door slammed shut. Joey turned around and found himself face to face with Bruggers, sr., who, with his back against the door, smiled shrewdly down upon the outwitted young strategist.

“Thought you were going to duck out and leave your mother an’ me without your comp’ny, Joey?” queried the father, lightly.

“Bruggers!”

“My love?”

“Shut up.”

“Yes, my ——”

“Joey.”

“Yes, ma.”

“You’re late.”

“I was sick.”

“Sick!”

“Sick!”

Mrs. Bruggers said it first. Her husband chimed in to lend emphasis to her meaning.

“Bruggers! Shut up. Keep shut. Joey!”

“Yes, ma.”

“Who did you come home with, Joey?”

“Miss Ruth and Mr. Lord.”

“Ah-ha!” “Ah-ha!” As before, Mr. Bruggers echoed his wife’s exclamation.

“Swells!” said Mrs. Bruggers. “ ’Sociating with swells while me ’n your pa is sitting here suffering.”

“Yes;” said Mr. Bruggers, solemnly shaking his head over the enormity of such conduct, “while we was suffering.”

“Joey!” Mrs. Bruggers stretched out a huge, fat hand, palm up, and went through the motion of closing and reopening the fingers in suggestive fashion.

“Money,” said she, whereupon Joey dutifully stepped forward and deposited his weekly earnings in the itching palm. Mrs. Bruggers without a word or change of expression cautiously hit the half-dollar, scanned the solitary bank-note, and slapped both down on the table with unnecessary noise and vigour. She looked at

shaking her head, an attitude of deep, personal injury.

"Two'n a half," said she, mournfully. "Only two'n a half. Oh, well, you can't expect much from such kids." She spoke to the world at large now. "No, you can't expect much. Now, if you was strong and tough, Joey, like some men's kids, you might be a big help to your poor ma. But, no; what wasn't to be wasn't to be. Well, such is life for a poor, lone woman."

And Mrs. Bruggers treated herself to the luxury of a colossal sigh of self-pity.

"Bruggers."

"My dear?"

"The ticket for the clock."

"But, my love; I was going, wasn't I?"

"You was. But you ain't. The ticket."

"My love, it isn't necessary that you should go chasing out on these little errands. You tire yourself unnecessarily. I'll run these errands, my love. I ——"

"You'll do nothing of the sort."

"I — I'll come back with the change, my love."

"You won't. Because you won't get a chance. The ticket." Mrs. Bruggers again stretched out her great hand and again made the suggestive movements with her fingers. Bruggers surrendered. From an inside vest pocket he drew a paper covered memorandum book — a patent medicine advertisement — and with a serious expression he began to search through its leaves. Bruggers grandiloquently called the book his wallet, and assumed a very business-like air when handling it. From

a distance one might have supposed that the book contained a long list of priceless memoranda; on close inspection it could be seen to contain one thing—a yellow ticket from a pawn shop. This Bruggers fumbled over several times as if searching vigorously through a mass of material. At last he drew it forth with an expression of relief.

“Ah, here it is, my dear. Thought I never would find it. There you are, my love, there you are.”

Mrs. Bruggers took the ticket without a word.

“Bruggers.”

“Yes ——”

“The can.”

Slowly, reluctantly Bruggers surrendered the pail in his hand. Wistfully he eyed Mrs. Bruggers as she arose and moved toward the door. She had thrust the pawn ticket and money into some sort of a pocket above her swelling bosom, and now she stopped and posed for a moment at the doorway in her favourite position, arms akimbo, head thrown back and to one side, expression vigorously critical.

“Joey.”

“Yes, ma.” Joey by this time had climbed into the chair vacated by his father and was voraciously eating of what remained of the miserable excuse for a meal.

“What’s your friend, Miss Ruth, doing now?”

“She’s going to have a meeting in the Park to-night,” said Joey.

“Huh! She’d better slip a-body a piece of change. Well, remember this, young man: next Sat’day night

don't go running 'round the streets. Nice son, you are. Loafing on the way home while your pa an' ma sits here without a cent in the house and the clock in hock, and the poor-house always staring us in the face. That's the thanks a body gets for raising you. Bruggers!"

"My love?"

"If you lay a hand on 'im while I'm out I'll kill you when I come back. Hear me?"

"Yes, my dear," said Bruggers humbly; and as the door closed upon the swelling back of his wife he treated himself to a huge and significant wink.

Joey meanwhile was eating away with an energy that told plainly the reason for his collapse of the evening. Bread and potatoes as the exclusive items of a meal are not things to tempt the ordinary appetite, but Joey's appetite was so far removed from the ordinary that there may be no comparison. In fact, his was no mere appetite, it was hunger. He ate ferociously, swallowing the poor food whole, and a glass of water from the greasy tap served as his drink. And all the time his father watched him with a sinister touch to the perpetual smirk of his lips.

Presently this model parent approached his feasting son, and, leaning on his knuckles on the table, bent forward in an attitude of judicial examination.

"Joey," he said. It was his peculiarity that when the mistress of the house was absent he assumed as nearly as might be her tone and manner.

"Yes, pa."

"Tell me, what made you late?"

"I was sick," said Joey.

“Joey! Don’t lie to me.”

“I ain’t lying.”

“I suppose, Joey, you didn’t happen to run an errand after hours to-night?” Mr. Bruggers waited only until Joey shook his head, and continued:

“And I suppose you didn’t get a quarter for running it, either, eh?”

“I didn’t run any, I tell you.”

“No,” sneered Mr. Bruggers, “and I suppose your swell friend, Miss Ruth, didn’t happen to slip you a piece of change for good luck, either, did she? Nor that Mr. Lord didn’t either, I suppose. No, I suppose not. But Joey—Joey,” Mr. Bruggers’s voice tried to take on a tone of firmness. “I think we’ll see for ourselves about this.” At this he suddenly leaned over, caught the boy by the shoulder and jerked him violently away from the table. Joey cried out with the pain and squirmed under the tight fingers, but Bruggers held on.

“We will see for ourself, Joey,” he continued softly, tightening his grip. “We will see with our own eyes. Not that I doubt you, Joey. Oh, no. Who could doubt such a sweet little angel as you, who makes friends with swells and leaves his parents sitting home without a cent in the house? Who could doubt you, eh, you little precious?”

As his words rolled out faster his fingers sank farther into the boy’s flesh until Joey bent double with pain, and at last in desperation tore feebly at the fingers that held him. Bruggers had been waiting for this.

“You filthy little ingrate!” he cried, and knocked Joey

down with a blow on the temple. "Strike the hand that feeds you, will you? Get up."

From a man with a man's strength such a blow might easily have been fatal, but from a wreck like Bruggers it was only sufficient to knock the little victim off his feet. To be knocked down was no novelty to Joey and he fell with his elbows instinctively thrust beneath him. He was not even stunned. He knew better than to disobey his father's orders, and slowly he arose, guarding another possible blow with his arm crooked before his face.

"Come here."

Joey advanced in fear and trembling.

"Turn around," commanded Bruggers, and when Joey had obeyed he thrust two hands simultaneously into the boy's pockets with a dexterousness that warranted the supposition that Mr. Bruggers had done this sort of thing several times before. Finding nothing, he vented his disappointment in a blow in the middle of Joey's back that sent him reeling across the room to the wall.

"Now, go on with your meal," he commanded, seating himself at the table, "and if you say a word about this to anybody you know what you'll get."

Joey went back to his bread and potatoes and water in silence. He would have loved to run away, to dash out of the door, down the hall, into the street, anywhere, to get away from that room; but his stomach was crying insistently for food.

"Well!" said the father lowering across at him as he sat down.

"What, pa?" said Joey.

"I said you know what you'll get if you say anything."

"Yes."

"Well?"

"I won't say anything."

"Huh! You'd better not. You fought me. Don't forget that, Joey; be sure that I won't."

He glowerd fiercely at the poor little figure, as if daring him to dispute his authority and power. He was emphatically dominant when dealing alone with Joey, was Bruggers, and he never failed to make the most of it. He had just caught the child's eye as he stole a glance across the table and had cowed him into abject terror with his threatening mien, when the door creaked and Mrs. Bruggers entered the room.

The instantaneous and significance of the change that went over the countenance of Mr. Bruggers at this is indescribable. It seemed that he lost inches in height; it was as if the sycophantic fool had been playing with the mask of the king.

"My dear!" said Mr. Bruggers in a tone that oozed respect, admiration, and affection, rising to his feet, and beaming upon the overflowing can.

"Bruggers."

"Yes, my love."

"Put it up," said Mrs. Bruggers, handing him a little metal clock, unquestionably the most valuable piece of furniture in the room.

"I shall hasten, my dear," said Bruggers, responding to the command with alacrity. The clock went up on

the shelf above the table, and Bruggers jumped down from the chair from which he had performed the operation, eagerly expectant, his tongue moving between his lips suggestively.

Mrs. Bruggers walked to the table, placed the can before her, and seated herself in the chair opposite her child. Something long and flat showed sharply beneath the tight bosom of her wrapper. Bruggers licked his chops more avidly as he saw this; he knew a bottle even when he couldn't see it, did Bruggers.

"Joey," said Mrs. Bruggers, her hands guarding the can.

"Yes, ma."

"Did he touch you?"

"No, ma," lied Joey promptly.

"Joey is such a good little boy, who could touch him?" purred the man.

"Bruggers."

"My love?"

"Here's luck," and with this Mrs. Bruggers hid her face behind the can for a length of time that made the waiting Bruggers grow alarmed.

"Clara, my love," he said warmly. "Not too much, not too much, all to onct."

Mrs. Bruggers, finally having slaked her thirst, burst into a fit of yeasty coughing, and smiling cheerfully, handed over the can. As Bruggers repeated her performance she took the bottle from her bosom and placed it upon the table. Joey looked from one to the other as they drank. They scarcely noticed him. Presently,

having finished the food that had been left for him, he arose and slipped noiselessly from the room. It was Joey's regular Saturday night, but to-night there was a gleam of light in the darkness. He had some place to go beside out on the hot, stinking curb. Miss Ruth was going to have a meeting in the Park, and he would go out and lie on the grass and listen.

CHAPTER VII

MEANWHILE let us remember that Della had weighed the meeting and the theatre in the balance and had decided in favour of the latter.

“What, ho! yer leddyship? The carriage waits without. What? Not dressed yet? Say! Wish I had so many glad rags it took me four hours to get inside of 'em. I'd soak 'em and hire a vally to help me dress, I would honest.”

Freddy sat outside the closed door of Della's little room — Della being an orphan who had to keep gentlemen out of her room — and professed to grumble over her tardiness. He was gloriously attired for the evening; the height of his collar was wonderful to behold; the crease in his striped trousers was metallic; his tie was fearsomely red; and he smelled abundantly of the barber shop.

Inside the room Della, before a mirrored wash stand, was putting the finishing touches to her Saturday evening metamorphosis with loving hands, for she loved to be prettily dressed, did Della. Her idea of a paradise would have been a place where one was dressed up seven days out of the week.

All over the Tenement this same Saturday evening

transformation was going on to a certain degree. Saturday night of all nights in the week is the night to see the Tenement. Then it lives. The sense of temporary release from labour is in the air. The Tenement's dwellers become individuals. Through the week they are cowed members of a class. Now the natural being asserts itself. The place of labour is left behind, the grip of toil for awhile shaken off, and the fear of late rising on the morrow has vanished. A man relieved from strain stretches himself, rubs his arms, perhaps yawns a little. The Tenement on a Saturday night suddenly finds itself unshackled and proceeds in its own sweet way to demonstrate its appreciation of the blessed state of freedom. Other week nights it is mainly a place to eat and sleep in, preparatory for next morning's early rising. But on Saturday—Saturday night—the Tenement flares into rosy, dawning life.

The change from a scene of sobriety and labour is prompt and sudden. With the coming of darkness the workers return home. Some, fortunate dogs that they are, have ceased work at one, and the manner in which the afternoon has been spent adds to the noise if not the life of the evening scene. But the manner of all in arriving betokens that a different purpose actuates them than prevails on other nights. It is not to get home for a rest between days; it is to get ready for joy, and the manner of preparation is as varied as the enjoyment itself.

By seven the Tenement has received the full quota

of its working brood. By seven-thirty it has seen them prepared, and at eight they are in full pursuit of the enjoyment for which this night exists.

The girls, of course, are best of all. Drab little females, tired and dusty from the work place, they come tripping up the stairs with a step that belongs to Saturday night and to Saturday night alone. They are unpleasing little spectacles to the eye then, dressed for utility alone, with a minimum regard for ornament or attraction. Within the space of that hour, between seven and eight, they trip down those stairs, altered even as is the dull slug emerging radiantly into the gaudy butterfly. Their dress is changed from head to toe—if they are so fortunate to possess a complete change. If not, ribbons and other things beyond masculine knowledge are distributed about the person with so broad and free a hand as to create the same impression, and amid the dark, discoloured halls and walls of the tenements their bright colours and their crisp newness stand out with an effect of butterflies upon a prison wall. It is the fairy, Joy, emerging from creation in the Palace of Rats. She is a slangy, flippant fairy, and she chews gum, yet she rises and soars from her environment on this one occasion. She is gay, she is clean, she is merry. The Tenement is dark, murky, and without hope. She is in colours—red, pink, green, white—what not. The tight ribbon around her neck is an offering to the spirit of carnival; the fluffy little curl of her hair flaunts defiance to all that is harsh and cumbering in this life. She is dressed up, and is going to dance, theatre, or wherever her

mite of pleasure has been made possible, is our metamorphosed little woman of the Tenement; and in none of them was the change so complete, so startling, as in our own frivolous little Della. And with none did the change require so much time. Wherefore Freddy must cool his patent-leather heels in the adjoining room while Della completed her toilet behind a locked door.

A muffled snicker came through the key-hole in response to the young man's last words.

"That a joke?" asked Della with hairpins in her mouth.

"What? That? No, that ain't no joke. That's what we call light raypurtea in society."

"Hah! Fat lot you know 'bout society!"

"Who? Me? Well, I guess yes. Scrapped a coachman once."

"Bet he licked you."

"Not so you could notice. But that ain't got nothin' to do with our gettin' late to the show."

"Don't wait if you don't want." Della evidently had removed the hairpins from her mouth. She now spoke in her normal tones.

"What?"

"Don't wait if you're getting tired."

"Say. That's too raw a slam." Freddy sat up.
"You know I was only kidding."

"Did I?" Quick and sharp.

"Sure. An' you know I'd wait for you until the show was done an' over with if you said so."

“Would you?”

“Don’t you know I would?” He rose to his feet and lowered at the door which separated them. “Haven’t you got to know that by this time?”

“How can I know?”

“How can you help knowing? Hain’t you got eyes? Can’t you see?”

“See what?”

“See — see that — aw, come on, Dell, you know what I mean. You know you do.”

“Don’t, either.”

“Why — well, haven’t I showed you by the way I come here — ” Freddy stopped abruptly. He was at a loss for what to say. This thing had come on rather too quickly to find him prepared, though, had he known it, Della was secretly rejoicing over the way in which she had drawn him out. He sat regarding the door with a look of deep disappointment, his brows puckered tightly, after the manner of a man struggling with a hard problem. At last he had it.

“If I haven’t showed that I want to *go* with you,” he blurted, “how is a guy going to show it, that’s all I want to know.”

“Is it?”

“Don’t you believe me?”

“Oh, sure — like a clam.”

“Cut that out, Della,” said Freddy gravely. “I ain’t kidding — not a kid.”

It was out now. Freddy sat down, tugging fiercely at his tight, creased trousers. In the other room Della was

silent. Her hat was on, and she was ready to go, but she waited a moment that she might compose herself and present a calm, disinterested exterior upon her appearance. There are advantages in a closed door under certain circumstances. She made no retort to Freddy's last statement.

"Well," she said, presently, rattling a comb on the stand as if in a great hurry. "I guess that'll do, since you're getting nervous." She came flouncing out with unnecessary energy. "Come on, now. S'pose you're pretty tired, eh? Gee, I wish we was there. How do I look, eh?"

Freddy rose and stood staring at her, nonplussed by the change that the hour had wrought. Never, perhaps, had Della been so successful in her weekly metamorphosis. No trace of the factory in this young woman. No sign that she worked for her living. For the time being she was a thing made for pleasure, a pretty, hectic little flower, as attractive as a pansy, as care-free as a daisy in a dell. The paleness was gone from her face; but the rouge was scarcely visible. Her light hair dropped over her forehead in tiny, coquettish curls, and her china-blue eyes glistened, while the mouth, well — the mouth was red and full, like a poppy, as if it had drawn on the rest of the little face for its life and warmth. The spirit of light-heartedness and joy romped in her being, and Freddy, as he stared, more than half expected to hear her burst out into joyous song. It would have seemed the natural thing for her to do, so seething was she with the spirit of jubilation.

“Dell,” he blurted, “even if I do say it myself you’ve certainly got ‘em all skinned when you doll up.”

“Yah!” laughed the girl in his face. “Soft soap Freddy,’ eh? Come on, let’s duck. I’m crazy to get down by the lights, and the crowds, where there’s something to see, and some one to see you, and everything is fine and lovely. Hah!”

“Sure,” agreed Freddy, following dumbly. He was stricken hard. He had pictured her so in his dreams, and here the dream stood before him in the flesh. Perhaps Della never had thought of it that way. Perhaps not! Innocent, unsophisticated, serpent-wise little Della!

“Say,” he repeated blunderingly. “You certainly are rich!”

“Go on!” She struck at him playfully and he caught the soft arm in his long, strong fingers. He drew her toward him and turned her around so she must look up at him. The magic of the flesh-touch flew through them like a new flame.

“Della,” he murmured hoarsely.

“Yes.” Della, too, was breathing hard.

“You *know* this ain’t no kidding game for me, don’t you?”

“Sure, I know, Freddy,” she whispered, after a moment’s scrutiny of his face. “Sure, I know.” She, too, was serious for the moment. It was a big moment. Then the babbling frivolity of her soul leapt back to its own.

“Come on; come on!” she cried, leaping away. “We’re late. Come on; let’s beat it.”

Out of the dark hallway she sprang and whirling on the walk filled her lungs to their limit with air, as a bird freed from a dark cage gulps in its freedom before it begins to trill. The Saturday-night life of the Court roared around them, a medley of peddlers, gasoline, and smells.

“Gee!” sighed Della, ecstatically. “Ain’t it a grand night!” She took his arm vigorously. She hung on to him as they stepped along, and she began to sing some words that she had heard Freddy hum, and which he had said belonged to some old song, he couldn’t remember what. The thing probably had come out of Freddy’s own head:

“Who are you waiting for, Kitty, Kid?

(No one knows.)

Why do you turn when I tip my lid?

(No one knows.)

Standing alone in the hall so swell,

Togged to the ears like a dawl.

Oh, I know that you’re ‘waiting the guy you ain’t hating,
I hope that he’s treating you well.”

She did a little dance step out of sheer exuberance, and then:

“Hey! You little divils! Can’t you see where you’re going?”

A circle of little tots in play had swung against them, and Della smacked them away from her immaculate skirts right merrily. Then, from a window above:

"Here, you! Leave that kid alone." A vigilant mother was guarding her young. "Just because you got somebody buying you clothes ——"

"Oh, you horrid thing!" giggled Della. "Show's where your mind is at.

"Who are you waiting for Kitty, Kid?

(No one knows.)

Why do you turn when I tip my lid——"

"Peg a brick at 'em, Larry," called the mother to the object of her solicitude.

— ("No one knows.")—Oh, there's a car, Freddy!"

"Soak 'em, Larry!"

"Come on, Freddy." And before Larry could find the desired brick, Della and Freddy were running for the Avenue, the vituperation of the enraged woman following them in an unheard stream.

At the corner Della pulled up abruptly.

"There isn't any car," said Freddy.

" 'Course not."

"Then what did you sprint for?"

"To get out of the dump. To blow off steam. Gee!" She faced him laughing, and pressing her elbows tightly to her sides, her hands hanging limply before her, she broke into a pivoting dance step, her feet as light as the wind, her fluffy skirts rising and falling, a picture that never, never had any business inside a factory.

"Standing alone in the hall so swell,

Togged to the ears like a dawl ——"

“Oh, Freddy, Freddy, I feel too good to be true.
Let’s walk down a block —

“‘Oh, I know that you’re ‘waiting, the guy you ain’t hating,
I hope that he’s treating you well.’”

“You *are* feeling flossy, ain’t you?”

“Oh, like a boid, like a boid. Whew! Don’t it feel good to get out of the dump? Hah? Don’t it feel like busting out of jail?—Oh, jiminy!— I felt like lamming Mrs. Lavin, though. Nasty thing! If she’d wash her kids’ noses once in awhile she wouldn’t have so much time to talk ‘bout her neighbours. I know all about *her*. No better’n she ought to be. ‘Me dear, dead husband, Mister Lavin.’ Husband! In her eye! Husband!” Della stopped with a significant sniff.

“Well, anyhow, yer leddyship, you handed the kid a slap on the ear, so you needn’t care,” said Freddy.

“Ain’t it the truth! Who’d care for the likes of her on the likes of a night like this?”

“Who, indeed, yer leddyship?”

“You only lower yourself by talking to them.”

“Sure, yer leddyship.”

They went on gaily, talking merely to ease their overflowing hearts. They met and greeted in passing a police officer lumbering heavily up Avenue.

“H’llo, kids,” said he.

“Kids, yer eye,” called back Della. “Can’t yuh tell a lady’n a gentleman when you see ‘em?”

“Sure,” laughed the officer without turning. “Show ‘em to me.”

“Ooh, poo-ey!” said Della. “Ain’t he the mean one!”

“They wouldn’t be none of yer kin, old bull!” cried Freddy pleasantly. “Don’t stop tuh chew the rag, Dell. We got no time.”

They had walked a block. At the corner a cable car overtook them, a car crowded to the doors with a crowd made up of other Dellas and Freddys likewise bent upon the radiant Saturday evening chase of lamp-fed Joy. But Della outshone her sisters as the born artist outshines the crude beginner. Her dress was dainty where the others were loud. Her ribbons hinted at the possibility of colours, the others flared blood-red and grassy green. And her little nose was not tilted pugnaciously upward, as the others, whose expression plainly bespoke that good old West Side sentiment, “A perfect lady, and I’ll scrap to prove it.” Della’s whole bearing, her attire and her expression, precluded the possibility of needing to furnish such proof; and her sisters looked and hated her, with the primitive hate of woman outshone by her kind.

“Like tuh know how she pays for the togs?”

“Don’t work in a laundry, I can tell yuh that.”

From a corner had come the loudly whispered insinuation, and like a flash came Della’s snapping rejoinder.

The first speaker hid her telltale red hands.

“Sam,” said she, casually to her escort, “why ain’t yuh careful ‘bout th’ comp’ny yuh make me meet?”

“Gowan,” sneered Della, “you wash my clothes.”

“Sam,” continued the laundress, paying no attention, “can’t yuh perfect a lady when she’s in yer comp’ny.”

Freddy, one arm around Della's waist, the other stretched up to a strap, sniggered delicately.

"Yes, Sam," said he, "can't you perfect a lady when she's in yer comp'ny?"

Sam, a stocky young man of Semitic stock, turned with threatening mien.

"What've you got to do with this?" he demanded, eying Freddy up and down.

"Or didn't yuh ever have a lady in yer comp'ny?" continued Freddy sweetly.

"Oh!" said the laundress, bringing her red hands back in sight. "D'you hear that?"

"'Course if you never did, Sammy," said Freddy, "yuh can't know how."

"Getting pretty fresh, ain't yuh?" growled Sammy.

"And if you don't know how, Sam, you're to be 'xcused, sure."

"Spose you run a night school of how to behave, don't you?"

"Sure. Couldn't wise you up any, though; I can see that from here."

"You're a wise guy. You certainly couldn't."

"Of course not. You're the candy boy, all right, Sammy. I bet you're the kid that put the salt in the ocean." Freddy grinned self appreciatively. There is this thing certain about Clay Court; it does appreciate its own jokes. "Sammy, what was your name before you were vaccinated?"

Della was snuggling against Freddy's wiry arm in great comfort. The adroitness with which he had so

quietly taken the fuss upon himself excited her admiration and as she watched the faces of the opposing couple grow purple under his care-free repartee, she covered her mouth in glee, and dug an elbow in Freddy's ribs to indicate her approval. He was a man, her Freddy. In that moment the deep, secret pride of a woman in the possession of a large, capable male sprang quick in Della's heart, and she nudged Freddy again in an excess of feeling.

Said Sam: "In about two minutes you'll get a surprise, if you don't shut up."

"If I thought there was any chance yer ever getting into a lady's comp'ny ——"

"Gawd!" said the laundress.

"I'd advise you to go out an' get some practice, Sam ——"

Suddenly Sam made as if to move forward valiantly.

"Don't you hit me, Sammy; remind me of my old mother kissing me and make me cry."

"I wouldn't have no row with you," said Sam contemptuously. Then Della's mirth broke out like a little bubbling fountain defying all bounds and control.

"Good as a show!" she murmured amongst the laughs.

"Oh, Freddy! You certainly did fix his clock."

"Who? Me? I only told him the truth, didn't I?"

"Sure. But it was as good as a lie — oh, say! Here!"

She pulled his arm and motioned for the conductor at the same time. She sprang for the door, and was in the

street, dancing toward the walk, before Freddy had fairly got started.

"What's the rush, yer leddyship?" he asked when he caught her.

"Rush 'nough," laughed Della. "We're here."

The lights of theatredom blazed around them, filling the thick hot night with a fat yellow glow. Two play-houses facing each other made the street a caldron of electric lights. Into the flashiest they hurried, and near the box office a short, shiny man, heavy in every feature from feet to lips, caught Freddy by the arm and drew him to one side as if he had been waiting for him. Della looked the man over, carelessly at first, then with considerable interest. He was a very impressive and elegant man to Della. She saw that he must be one of the powerful ones of the earth, a rich gentleman. His clothes were so swell and new, the diamond rings on his finger so obvious, the stud in his shirt so blinding. He looked at Della with leaden eyes, looked again, and grew interested.

"Who's 'at?'" demanded Della looking back over her shoulder when Freddy returned to her. She started, for the impressive man was following her with brightened eyes, and when he saw her turn he smiled.

"That, yer leddyship, is the key to the awful secret. Mr. Binger, that's who it is; J. Q. A. Binger, half owner of Electric Park, a big gun in the show business—the guy who give me the passes."

"What's he got to do with you?"

"Why—take it easy now—he's got everything to do,

yer leddyship. He's going to gimme a chance on the programme at the park a week from this eve'—a real, real chance to make good—and to-night he's going to blow me and you off to a swell feed after the show."

Della looked up at the honest, freckled face above her, looked long and carefully and saw that Freddy was telling the positive, solemn truth.

So she said: "Gowan! What d'you want to lie for?"

CHAPTER VIII

AT ABOUT this same time, while Freddy and Della were hurrying for hot red-plush seats to bask in the joys of summer vaudeville, Ruth and I were walking from the Tenement up the Avenue toward the Park, with a straggling party of the Tenement's women and children, including little Joey, following half a square behind.

Rinehart was talking again at the corner. Never was there a man so cursed with the Curse of Gab. The crowd was gathering around him. He had to shriek to make himself heard in the Saturday night babel, but shrieking was what Rinehart loved, and what his hearers applauded. He laughed when we passed, and most of his hearers laughed with him, and one of them, the little old man who had charge of the box, quitted the group and slouched sullenly along on the other side of the street. Neither Ruth nor I noticed, but the little man paused at times and nodded at us and threw his head up and laughed as if he knew a good joke and was going to play it.

Ah! that little, smudged-up Park that dotted like a green comma the long, hopeless line of the Avenue! One must have sweltered in a tenement's windowless room to know what that little spot meant to us in the days when the heat turned the buildings into

ovens wherein one might sit, and stew, and sweat, and go mad.

It was only a little breathing space, at the edge of the congested district, but it was Clay Court's one ray of hope. It was living testimony that there were pleasant things in the world, fresh air, green grass, bubbling waters, and freedom. The air had a taint of soft coal smoke, it is true, the grass was trodden till it was greasy, and the waters bubbled out of a concrete goose fountain, but, oh! it was good to go there at the end of the day and throw the bone-weary body on the ground and rest, rest, rest! It was a little taste of the Promised Land.

Here, on the hot summer nights, the sweltering brick boxes poured out their load of trapped humanity; and talk and tobacco, love and laughter filled the air like a cloud. Here also those stricken with the curse of the prophet rose up on boxes, chairs, and benches at strategic points and filled the air with gestures and words, begging the race to cease in its head-long rush to destruction, no matter what the particular route. At one corner the lights shone upon the venerable head of a loose-limbed patriarch who quaveringly sounded a call to turn from the delights of the flesh to the simple existence. "Since the earliest dawn of human hist'ry to the present ere-a, man has worshipped blindly the golden hand of the fatted calf. Wine, women, and money is what he's wanted, and that's why he's been unhappy. He deserted his natur'l life for the worship of Baal — in other words wine, women, and money — an' he won't never be happy until he cuts 'em out."

Nearby on a bench a hollow-chested young man, watery eyes hidden behind thick glasses, lectured didactically upon that marvellous problem: "Equal Division of Wealth." Half contemptuously, interested not at all in his audience, striving not in the least for an impression, he reeled off statistics, history, and quotations like a bloodless automaton, driven only by the desire to mouth the erudition to win which the eyes had grown so watery. Farther on, near a corner, a workingman, a lather, he announced, with a limp-covered Bible in his hands, condemned his hearers to the stern old hell of liquid fire and brimstone—"that burns ye and burns ye through all eternity"—unless they came forward and were saved then and there.

But mostly there were tired, sweaty mothers, who lay prone on the grass with half-naked children playing around them; tired men, who made the air pungent with smoke and spoke heavily at times and in monosyllables; kids, who romped incessantly and noisily, and the "young people," who, being at an age to be interested in one Great Problem to the exclusion of all else, ogled one another as they passed, walked arm around waist, or sought the most secluded benches according to their natures and the length of their acquaintance. A police officer paraded ponderously among them all, a heavy man with menacing tread, who, as shepherd of this strange flock, had one motto: "Pet the kids and soak the big ones," and who, following this principle, ruled with such success that Eternal Damnation, Equal Division of Wealth, and Simple Life held forth within shouting

distance night after night and never came to blows. And the peace of trees and grass and open space was upon it all, and for the nonce wild eyes grew sane, and weary, distorted mouths straightened and were at peace. Small parks are more than the lungs of the city; they give the street-bred a little chance to get near to God.

Ruth and her following came into the park by one of the paths that led to the little fountain in the centre. Here, under a pair of sputtering lamps, there was an open space of grass with a small, make-believe knoll at one end, and it was toward this that Ruth bent her steps. Part of her audience was on the scene, comfortably squatting on the grass, and the rest gathered quickly at her appearance so when Ruth stepped up on the knoll and faced her following she found herself the cynosure of a goodly number of eyes ranged before her in a crude semicircle.

The women and children were to the fore. It was to these that Ruth meant the most. The men slouched in the rear. They knocked their pipes out in respect of her, but it is to be feared that they were drawn mainly by the fact that here was a pretty, neatly dressed young woman to look at. For she was that, and more than that. I sat back on a bench and caught my breath as I saw for the first time how beautiful she was. And a little child, tumbling up from his mother's arms at the sight of her, tottered forward and went to sleep with his head resting against her toes.

Ruth folded her hands before her, and the murmuring noises of the crowd, which are a part of its being as the murmur of waves is a part of the sea, died down, and it

grew still. She was smiling a little, and it was only in the gleam of her eyes that one might have seen the fervour and zeal that burned within. After she had spoken awhile, this quality seemed gradually to communicate itself to the rest of her features, and even to the body itself, until at last, in the flood of her pleading, she became a mere medium of expression, her whole being caught and consumed in the delivery of her message. Before beginning, her eyes seemed to search out each individual in the crowd and signal that her words were meant directly for him, and then in her low, clear voice she spoke:

“Dear Brothers and Sisters: I am going to speak a few words to you to-night, and try to give you a message that lies so close to my heart that I cannot help but try to pass it on. It is a very old message, and yet one that is always new. It is the message of Jesus Christ: Love one another.”

She paused, and a faint expression of surprise, tinged here and there, perhaps, by a flicker of disappointment, was apparent upon some of the faces before her; surprise because of her last words, disappointment because it was not going to be something sensational.

“It may seem strange to say that here to you, and just at this time when our troubles seem heaviest and the idea of loving one another seems farther away than ever, but just now, dear friends, is the time when we most need to speak of it, and think of it, and take it into our hearts.”

Her voice, low and throbbing, had in it something of the blessed peace of the open space, of the grass, the trees, the quiet air, and the stars above, and these weary

souls leaned forward, eager at once to come within its sway and let it soothe them. They were disappointed no longer.

"We are sorely oppressed, dear friends," she went on. "Life at its best isn't a great pleasure to us. We work too hard; we get too little for what we do; and we get bitter. We work hard all day, and when we come home at night we are all tired out, and we don't feel good, and we don't take much time to think about what we do or what its effect may be on ourselves or others. We don't care about any rules; and we live in that careless way, and it makes a lot of trouble for us sometimes, and for others. Because there are rules that we should not transgress; and, oh, dear friends, how much better it would be for all of us if we only stopped to think of these rules, and didn't break them! How much easier life would be for all of us, how much more joy there would be in living. I know there isn't so much joy for many of us who are here to-night. The world doesn't seem to treat us fairly, and at times we feel that all the misery is loaded onto us, and that nothing can help us — nothing will lighten the burden. But a long time ago there lived on this earth a Being whom men called Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He was a very simple Being, and he saw the woe and misery of the less fortunate people of the world, people like ourselves, and he gave us Hope. Ye who are weary and heavy laden, come unto me, and I will give you rest. That was what Jesus Christ said, this Being who had God's wisdom in His brain and a child's tenderness in His heart. He knew how hard

life becomes at times. He lived with the common people, people like ourselves, and He understood. Yes, He understood all that fell to our lot, for He was one of us. Dear friends, did you ever stop to think of that? He didn't spend his time with the great people of the land, the rich and the powerful, but among the common people. People like ourselves. For He loved all men, and those who had need of Him most. He loved more than all others. He knew who needed Him, too. He knew how those who are oppressed grow weary of trying to do right — as we do — and how they must have a ray of light, a hope, if they are going to be kept from plunging into misery and unhappiness. We need that light and hope more than any one else, dear friends; and that is why Jesus Christ came to us."

She looked around the little group slowly, her eyes resting upon each one with an expression that was a caress. Her eyes told more than her words; they were all together, all of one great family, and she merely was telling them the things they ought to know. There now was none of the feeling among them of listening to a "preacher"; it merely was one friend talking to many. They sat perfectly silent, eagerly waiting for more. Even the blasé girl — pursuers of twenty — sensed that she was "different."

"He came with His message of hope, and His great command that we love one another. He spoke of Heaven, too, but also He told us how to live most happily here on earth. His religion is our religion, our guidance, and oh! dear friends, how much more happy our lives would

be if we only would heed his advice — if we would live as He commanded.

“He told us to love our neighbours. By neighbours he meant all people. It’s pretty hard to think of loving all people, and especially is it hard for us to think of it just now. We hardly can think of loving those people whom we feel are doing us great harm; it doesn’t seem that the rule can apply to them. We cannot love them, perhaps, but we must not hate them. For when we hate we begin to think of violence, and of hurting somebody, and that is a sin.”

An ugly little laugh broke out from somewhere in the rear; but it was too dark to see the interrupter and Ruth went on.

“We mustn’t think of hurting people because we think they have hurt us. That isn’t Christ’s will, and we must listen to His will, for only in that way will we be happy. And, dear friends, we will be happy if we do follow Him.”

Again came the short, sneering laugh. It was louder and bolder this time; yet the one who laughed remained hidden in the darkness beyond the circle of light. Ruth continued:

“Did you ever stop to think what a good world this would be to live in, friends, if we all remembered and obeyed that old command to love one another? Think of it! There would be no cruelty and oppression; no fighting, no stealing — none of the things that make life so troublesome at times. We don’t harm those we love. You mothers here don’t hurt the little children in your arms; you love them; you would do anything in

the world to make them happy. And that is how Christ meant and hoped this whole world — among all people would be if we followed His rule, if we loved one another."

The children wondered why their mothers gripped them so warmly. She had struck at the heart of her people: No, they wouldn't hurt their children; yes, it was because they loved them. Two or three of the women sobbed, just why they probably didn't know.

"It's true that we haven't got much time to waste in loving or thinking of loving people like us. We're too busy trying to make a living, and trying to get some clothes, and trying to have meals cooked at a certain time, and keep the rooms in as good condition as possible — too busy scrubbing and cleaning — to think about loving anybody. And yet isn't it so that you do all you can for those near you because you love them? And they do everything they can for you for the same reason — they love you! And how would it all be if we could have the same kind of feeling for everybody, for our neighbours and they for us? Of course, we don't expect to feel toward outsiders as we do toward those in our own family, and it isn't well that we should; but we can feel in a way toward them as we do toward our dear ones. We can feel kindly toward them. We can wish them all sorts of good things, wish that they keep their jobs, and their health, and that they may be happy. And we can feel that we can never, never want to harm them, any more than we would want to harm those who are dear to us in our own families. And that is what Christ meant, dear

friends. He meant that we — all of us — should feel like that toward our neighbours, and that our neighbours should feel that way toward us. And if we did — oh! what a difference it would make in this world! How much difference it would make to us above all people! Why it would — ”

“Would it keep the Company from cutting our wages?” It was the man who had laughed who spoke. He had moved toward the speaker until he stood within the circle of light. He was the man who had followed from the corner and he was playing his joke.

“Your Jesus of Nazareth!” he cried scornfully. “Don’t you know that’s all old stuff? He’s a back number. He didn’t ever know what conditions would be to-day. He’s no good to us. Organize! Organize! That’s all that will help us!”

His voice rose to the regular shriek of his breed. Then he was gone, and a child cried out in the stillness that followed.

A vagrant whiff of wind ruffled the light leaves in the tree tops, but, beneath, all was still and grave. Ruth stood a moment with tears in her eyes. Then: “Dear friends,” she said abruptly, “let us pray: Oh, Thou, who seest all things, remember us, the least fortunate of Thy children. Help us in our struggle toward the light. Help us to keep faith in Thee. Make the burden less heavy, so that faith may be borne, too. And bring Thy light to those who are fortunate; let them, too, see their blindness. We pray in the name of the Nazarene. Amen.”

Stooping she raised the sleeping child in her arms and kissing him upon the forehead bore him to the waiting mother.

“God bless you!” said the woman brokenly. “Bless you!”

But the men began to relight their pipes.

“Thank you, sister,” said Ruth warmly, kissing her upon the cheek. Then bidding them all a good night, she turned down the path to where I sat waiting. Back at the knoll the crowd remained sitting. The Park seemed strangely cool and restful on this night.

“Failed!” murmured Ruth bitterly. “Failed utterly. They could not accept what I told them. I had no message; it meant nothing to them. And yet it all seemed so simple, so evident, and so true to me. What he told them, that man, that was what they wished to hear, for that meant something to them, they understood. Oh, it is hard, hard!”

“How can you say you failed?” I cried. “Did you not see the women?”

I thought of her father in that instant. The great Rev. David Arthur never questioned the success of his message, never doubted for an instant himself. Self-sufficient, revered, powerful! Verily; what will not an assured position do to the souls of the best of men!

We walked out slowly. The night life of the district droned about us. We were, so it seemed to me, shoulder to shoulder with ten thousand of our kind. And they were men and women — together. In all that maze of humanity I began to feel lonesome. It was the first

time I knew the sensation. I stepped nearer to Ruth. She looked up, even as I looked at her. The lonesomeness began to go away.

So do the great moments come to a man; they — But I am writing the story of Clay Court.

“What were you thinking of?” she asked.

How could I answer? The scheme of the world seemed to have been made over for me in the last four hours. What had been, was not. What never had been, was. The things that I had known — that all my world had known — to be true, were lies, builded on a mire of error. The world was not what we thought, and wrote, and said it was. It was a world that we did not know; we had touched the pleasant shores, but never had sought to explore the interior. And our gods were Ignorance and Self-Deceit.

But at all events my discoveries here, few as they were, had left me sure of a few specific conclusions: Joey must be taken out of the Factory and away from the Tenement, and placed where he could live, and where his great soul might have its chance to flower into its destiny; Della must be seen safely into marriage with Freddy; Perkins and his family — well, something must be done, that was sure.

“I was wondering,” said I, “how many Joeys, and Dellas, and Freddys, and Perkins babies there are in these United States!”

CHAPTER IX

AND now, where shall we go?" The "show" at the Imperial was over, the crowd was emptying itself into the street, and Freddy and Della stood in the lobby and basked in the effulgence of Mr. J. Q. A. Binger.

The introduction was over. Mr. Binger beamed, the diamond in his shirt front beamed, the gold in his teeth and the rings on his fingers beamed, and he, Binger, the effulgent, was asking Della to name the place where they should sup.

That was the greatest, the most lasting impression of the evening for Della. He, Binger, a swell gentleman, judging her solely by appearances, presumed that she was accustomed to supping after the show.

The show had been spoiled for Della. So little had she noticed what was going on across the foot-lights that she would scarcely have attempted to say whether the show was good or bad; and normally Della was a critic, bold and free. But there were greater things afoot to-night. The great, glittering dream of months was to be realized; after the show — supper in a swell restaurant! So Della, being by nature a blooming little butterfly, and by circumstance a drab little moth, sat impatiently until the end; and then, when she

met Binger, she trembled, though she couldn't guess why.

"And now, where shall we go?"

"Oh, any place," said Della. "Don't ask me."

"Dere is Toussang's. A nice place. K-viet. Goodt foodt. Nice crowd. Do you like Toussang's?"

"Sure." Della had passed the place once. "Respectable ain't it?"

"Ha ha!" laughed Binger till his fat throat rippled. "Respectable? Toussang's? Dat's goodt. Come; I haf a cab waiting."

He led the way to a hansom and Della, whose nearest acquaintance with hansom was dodging them, looked it over with a critical eye and said: "This respectable, too?"

And Binger was won, for he was something of an epicure was Binger, and he prided himself on his reputation for having a good eye.

As for Della, it must be admitted that she was in a state of exhilaration that was a step toward a condition of complete intoxication. The lights in the lobby, the golden teeth of Binger, the shining diamond, the soft seat of the hansom, all of them helped her on. Already she had flown a thousand miles away from Clay Court; already she was floating in a strange new world of pleasure, a delightful world, a world where the ugly necessities of life did not exist, where pleasure and luxuries were the only things considered; the world, in short, where Della felt that she belonged. Never for an instant did she feel that she was out of place. Nay, on the other hand, she

felt instinctively that she had found her true environment. The little hot-house plant had sniffed its native air.

But Freddy — poor Freddy — was out of place. Della, carefully watching out of the corner of her eyes, compared him with Binger, Binger the magnificent, Binger the shiny; and Freddy suffered terribly. No slickness about Freddy, no glittering smile, no fat hands on which to display diamond rings. Nothing of the sort. Big hands, big feet, freckles, humble grin, old-fashioned; Della's plumes tossed in anger. Why should Freddy be like that? Why couldn't he be swell, like Binger? Well, he would have to be pretty soon, or — Della wrecked her train of thought guiltily; but in her heart that was a little pang that Freddy, being with her, betrayed her as from Clay Court.

“Here y're, sir.” The cab pulled up before Dous-sang's, the lights beckoned them in, and Binger, more magnificent than ever, ushered them through the glittering portals, gazed for a moment around the crowded room and crooked a jewelled finger at the head waiter.

“Two to-night, Mr. Binger?”

“T'ree — to-night.”

“Yessir, yessir. Three — for Mr. Binger. Quick!”

(“Ah!” thought Della, “this is what it is to be a swell rich gentleman!”)

They found themselves at a favoured table in a corner. The head waiter hovered anxiously about; the omnibus fairly flew to set the table, and the guests at the nearby tables, wonderful, well-fed women with wonderful faces and marvellous busts, elegant men, with wonderful

clothes, and oil-slicked hair, turned red necks and whispered that, yes, that was Binger, the showman, but what was that with him, d'you know?

“A nice place. K-viet; goodt service andt — andt always respectable. Ha, ha, ha! Now, for indstance — ” Binger picked up the menu with the air of a man to whom ordering midnight suppers is a delight — “for indstance, what shouldt we begin with?”

The crowd, the wonderful, well-fed women and the elegant men; the perfume; the grand waiters; the music from the band in the red suits; the swish of costly clothes, all went to Della's head. She scarcely heard Binger. She leaned back far in her chair, and drank it all in with staring eyes.

“A cocktail? Nice Rossington's here.”

“No,” said Freddy.

“Martini?”

“No.”

“Don't drink,” said Della coming out of her dream. “Not to-night, anyhow,” she added, and relapsed into her state of pleasant bewilderment, while the blood came with a rush into her face and her eyes sparkled, and her lips grew redder than ever. She heard Freddy say critically: “Bad 'cello in that orchestra,” heard Binger give his orders. She answered “Yes” to half of his suggestions and shook her head at the rest. But mostly she dreamed, and this was her dream: that Doussang's was her world and that dusty, sweaty finishing-rooms did not exist.

“Ain't it grand?” she whispered once to Freddy.

“What?”

“The — the whole thing.”

“Oh, sure,” said Freddy, in such a curt tone that Della had to laugh.

Binger’s piggish little eyes followed her movements when Freddy was not looking. Before the supper was half over he had given Freddy a permanent place in the Saturday evening bill at Electric Park, with the understanding that it was to be a regular all-week thing if he “took.” Near the end of the meal he assured him heartily that he would “take” without a doubt.

“You’re goodt enough,” said Binger lolling fatly back in his chair. “Dere issn’t anny chanct dat you ain’t goodt enough. Budt idt iss in gedtting going righdt that coundts. I vill fix you up righdt.”

Oh, what an evening that was for Della! Lights to the left, the right, and all about her. Lights on the table beside them. Flashing, shimmering gowns, and jewels, and always the wonderful women and the well-dressed men, and she, the little stitcher, sitting there in the midst of them, and as good as any of them. As good as any! She knew it. Instinctively she knew it. Binger knew women, knew how to appraise them, and were not his eyes upon her even when the grandest of those big, full-busted women swept swishing past? And did not the men who passed gaze upon her with significant eyes?

She was attractive. Even there in the midst of all that competition she was more than holding her own Eve-like own. Della shook herself and tilted the soft little chin

in the air. She was happy, drunkenly happy. She had glimpsed her paradise. This was where she belonged.

She looked at Freddy, and the red mounted into her temples and her eyes once more felt hot with shame. The sign of Clay Court was writ large upon him. Even to the honesty that showed flagrantly in his merry blue eyes was he of the earth earthy. It was a shame, thought Della. Freddy certainly would have to become more stylish. On second thought she drew considerable comfort from the meditation that the crowd around them couldn't possibly know but what she was with the large, the ornate, the stylish Binger. But Freddy would be all right when he got more style, when he was more like the elegant gentlemen who ordered waiters around as if they had been born in a restaurant.

They parted from Binger at a corner after midnight; he went to his gleaming hotel, they took the car for Clay Court; and Della choked down something in her throat as Freddy seated her beside a dust-covered night labourer. How dirty and unpleasant it was! How commonplace the crowd that went home with them. How dim the lights. How different from the world they had just stepped out of.

She discouraged all of Freddy's efforts at conversation. Her thoughts were running in a bitter circle. She saw the dirty, hopeless court to which they were going. Then the Tenement which they called home. Then the Factory. Then the Tenement again, and then the Factory once more. An endless circle, punctuated

occasionally by excursions with Freddy, but in the main that was life to her: The Tenement and the Factory in a ceaseless round.

"Oh, Freddy!" she cried suddenly in a whisper. "Wouldn't it be swell to have enough money to eat in those swell places all the time?"

"Sure," said Freddy, doubtfully. "Get the gout, though, I guess."

She laughed, not at his remark, but at him.

"Yes, I suppose you would," she said. But Freddy did not notice that the accent was on the "you."

He helped her off the car with great solicitude, and she shuddered as the dark court, rendered all the more gloomy by two gas lamps, loomed up before them. And near the corner stood the inevitable group of men with Rinehart as their leader, discussing the impending trouble at the Factory.

"Aw, gee!" pouted Della. It was the proverbial cold water. "Why can't they shut up. They'll be spoiling things for everybody first thing they know."

"Oh, I guess not," said Freddy cheerfully. "Not for us. You notice how things are coming my way, don't you? I tell you, Della" — he bent over her earnestly — "when a man goes along tending to his own business, and leaves the booze alone, and tries to do something the best he knows how, it's pretty hard for others to spoil things for him. A man's his own spoiler if he's spoiled. All a fellow has got to do to get going right is to keep away from things like this, and set his mind on something, and keep plugging away at that one thing, and keep his

nerve, and the first thing you know things'll be turning out the way for us — all to the rosy."

"Perhaps," said Della.

"Sure. And we don't have to worry about all this disturbance, not me and you. Understand?"

She made no answer. They were in the Tenement hallway.

"Well?" said Freddy. She turned and faced him. Instinctively they leaned toward each other. He took her in his arms, and she gave in and pressed closely to him. After all Freddy was her fate. . . . It was dark in the hallway. They were all alone.

"Next Saturday night tells the story, Dell," said Freddy, when the time for parting came. "It's all right, Dell, say you know it's all right."

"Yes." She hung on him fiercely for a moment. Then she laughed recklessly. "I'll dream of diamonds to-night, anyhow."

"All the time," said Freddy. "Because it's as good as settled and me and you get out of this mess for good."

"Do we?"

"You bet!" he said, shaking his fist at Clay Court. "You bet. We've got this game beat to a fare — ye — well!"

Poor Freddy! Poor Della!

CHAPTER X

THE Tenement sleeps. The noise and the brawling die down. Footsteps on the stairs grow fewer and fewer until at last there are none. The lights go out save the single flickering jet in each hall. The fat, stinking darkness of the Tenement night comes into its own; and the rats run scampering here and there, searching with avid noses for food bits in the halls.

Up in the blackest corner of the fourth floor hall little Joey cowers against the wall till the last stray noises have vanished and the darkness and silence are complete. Like a fugitive hiding from his pursuers, he crouches in the gloom, the single spot in the Tenement where the sicken night brawls can not reach him.

He had come home slowly from Ruth's meeting. He had wandered back to sit on the curb before the Tenement and wait until the sounds from the second floor rear died down to a somewhat sane level. Then cautiously he had crept up the stairs and, sneaking on tiptoes, had peered into the Bruggers's home. He had come away in a great hurry, for some things he could not look upon, and his mother awake and far gone in liquor was one of them, and it being too late for the street he had dragged himself up to the fourth floor's black hole, beyond the reach

of the gas jet's trembling light; and there he remains, hugging his knees, till the silence tells him that the second floor rear is asleep, that alcohol has made it safe for him to go home. He knows what the home will be and what he will find there in all probability — father and mother together upon the kitchen floor, feebly clasped in a last maudlin embrace or gripping each other in the postures of a busy little family row. For one quality Joey's parents have in common; they both succumb at once.

In spite of these things, however, home is home, a bed is a bed, and tired, aching bones cry out for a place of rest, let the pain to the soul be what it may. It is an old story to Joey, though he never grows used to it, for all his life he has never known anything else. His first and best memories are of a room where the floor was damp and an alley directly outside the window. But it had a window. Ah! that was the dream to remember: it had an outside window. It was low, down near the ground — the room was on the first floor — and two wooden bars nailed across its lower half served as nurse maid and guardian for Joey. His mother sat him up in the open window and Joey leaned out between the bars and soaked his head in the warmth and smells of the sunny alley, and fought the flies that strove to enter his eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.

So did Joey first remember that he had seen this world. The alley was his universe. In it and its life he saw existence. He was shocked when he had his first conscious glimpse of the street in front. He had fancied the world as a world of alleys.

The life of the alley was a busy one, especially for the eye of a child which notes all the tiny things that escape the dull adult faculty. Rats ran around, in, over, and under the garbage boxes; dusty, worn-looking cats pursued them, the cats in their turn being pursued by dusty, worn-looking, scarred dogs. Regularly each afternoon a group of men gathered near the window and drank beer. They kept the pail hidden under the eaves of a low shed. When the pail was emptied they threw the scanty dregs directly under the window, and the flies gathered there in hordes. The odour of stale beer always was in Joey's nostrils.

Other things happened in the alley. There were fights between men, women, children, and dogs. There was much crap shooting, especially on Sunday afternoons, and sometimes the police came, and then Joey sucked his thin fist wonderingly and gazed with great eyes at the desperate confusion that came over the scene. There were even lovers' meetings back there in the alley; clandestine wooings of the modest, and of the dishonest, who sought to remove their love-making from the eyes of the street.

Then there were the peddlers, the rag pickers, and all the various scavengers to whom the alleys are their fields of livelihood. Their cries were the only music that came to Joey's ears. He waited eagerly for their coming, and sometimes they pointed at him with their whips or hooks. And on one bright day had come a great event, the incident that stood out in Joey's memory with yesterday's vividness. A red-bearded Russian Jew had stopped

before the window, smiled queerly up at the face between the bars, and, reaching into the bag on his back, had brought out and handed to Joey a broken piece of mirror. Joey was stunned with happiness over the gift. He cut his mouth on the sharp edges first, testing the thing's edibility, but soon having discovered the glass's function he was contented the day long.

One day it slipped from his fingers and fell out in the alley, and a passing wagon crushed it under wheel. Joey cried for a week. Nobody ever replaced the mirror.

Such were the memories that Joey looked back to with pleasure, the short, bright days of life before the Factory claimed him for its own! And he looked forward to —— But let us follow him to-night and perhaps we may see.

Out from his hole comes Joey, much like a trembling little rat. The light from the hall jet strikes him and he blinks as he starts downstairs. Joey, being used to the place, does not notice what would at once strike the strange visitor's attention; the odour of those dark halls at night is like the stink of a prison. They stink with the stink of many people cooped in a small space. They reek with the odour of air that is caught and trapped and seldom changed. In prisons the visitor notices first of all the prison-smell, an odour that is to be found no place else on earth, and so it must be with the unaccustomed visitor to the Tenement on this evening. There is a suggestion of kinship in these smells; though carefully analyzed they are quite different. Nature resents the trapping of any of its breeds; and perhaps our Tenement is more akin to the prison than we suspect.

At all events, there is the stink. There is not enough ventilation to disturb it. It hangs in the motionless air like a fog, and the newcomer may pause to wonder how long he might breathe this without acquiring the taint with which it all seems poisoned.

Joey doesn't stop to wonder. One would say at first hand that he was unconscious of the smells that envelop him. This would be in error, and a slander of Joey's present famishing condition. Though that medley of odours, so tightly amalgamated that inexperienced noses discover but one, Joey's experienced olfactories dive with certainty, and pounce upon one that arouses interest in Joey's brain. Downstairs the scent drags him. He is on the first floor now, and by the tiny flicker of gas at the front of the hall, he bends to search for the odour's source. And now by the same half inch of burning gas, and following Joey's movements, we may see with the naked eye one of the several reasons for the odour that strikes the senses at a first entrance. On both sides of the hall, at irregular intervals, stand pails containing the waste of the food of those who dwell within. There is no need or excuse for detail. Most of that food was spoiled ere it ever reached the Tenement; all of the waste is in the advanced stages of putrescence. Joey goes along from pail to pail until he finds the one containing the spoiled orange whose odour led him to the chase. He carries it forth to the light. It is only green in spots. Joey eats it there under the gas with the disregard of the utterly famished. For this is one of the triumphs of civilization, that a child can grow up half-starved within

six squares of opulence. Then the clamour of his empty stomach half stilled he remounts the steps to the second floor and noiselessly goes to his room.

“Oh, mother!” a little girl—a well-fed, decently clothed little girl—once cried upon first seeing a room in the Tenement, “Do little boys and girls live here?”

“Yes,” said the mother.

“Oh, mother!” Tears stood in the little girl’s eyes. “Whatever have they done!”

Perhaps this is describing the rooms of the Tenement better than could be done in many words.

Since the building is as broad as it is long, and quite without light or airshafts, it follows that certain rooms, mainly those in the building’s rear, will be entirely without those most desirable quantities in dwellings—daylight and fresh air. Given fair play and it would seem that such rooms, if occupied they must be, would fall to the lot of those who, through sturdiness of body, would suffer least from the lack of these desirable quantities. But, of course, nothing of the sort happens. There is one room just a little darker, just a little farther removed from the air, just a little worse than any other above ground in the Tenement. It is a small room, for it is supposed to be a closet, and is at the end of the hall on the second floor. It is an inner room, removed even from the open space of the hall. It is one of the most unfit human habitations to be found in the world, be it among the civilized or the savage. It is Joey’s room, because he is helpless and small. The Tenement is a mine, the

halls are pit holes, and little Joey's room is at the end, the blackest chamber of them all.

Mr. and Mrs. Bruggers, collectively or individually, are not on the kitchen floor to-night, and Joey's heart sinks. They lie crosswise just inside the door of their bedroom and Joey, to reach his room, must pass through that bedroom. If he wakes them there will be curses, though the flesh may be too weak to rise and deal out blows.

Joey reconnoitres. Mr. Bruggers lies spread out flat, face downward, his nose so flattened against the floor that he takes in breath with a noise of mighty suction. On top of him, her face serenely upturned toward the ceiling, lies Mrs. Bruggers, her mouth open, her great bosom rising and falling with the regularity of a machine. The faint light gleams on her shiny round cheeks, on her nose and chin. Obviously there is only one thing to do, and Joey does it as he has done before. Noiselessly removing his shoes he leaps the human barrier, missing Mrs. Bruggers's shiny nose by a scant inch, and landing on the other side with a thud that jars Mr. Bruggers's hard pressed physiognomy. But it no more awakens him than the creak of the undertaker's screw-driver awakens the corpse. A man in a condition to bear Mrs. Bruggers on his back without remonstrance is in no shape to notice trifles. Joey takes one last look at his snoring parents, and crosses the bedroom to his door.

"A clothes closet," said the man who builded the Tenement.

"Closet, indeed," said Mrs. Bruggers when she saw

it. "Clo's, who's got clo's to waste hangin' 'em on the wall. A room for Joey; that's what 'tis. Jest his peekid little fit."

Joey opened the door. The door opened outward, else it could not have opened at all, for the broken piece of a sofa that served for a bed occupied the room to the exclusion of all else. There was no light. As Mrs. Bruggers said, what was the use of a light in a place like that, anyway? There wasn't anything there to see, and a body could feel his way to bed as well as not. Light, indeed! Where would you put a light in there if you had it? *They* had a light in *their* room; if he wanted to see a light, why, let him open the door. Which, of a necessity, worked out quite well, for Joey had to keep his door ajar to escape the inconvenience of complete suffocation.

Joey carefully felt his way to the bed. Carefully, in order that the creaking of unsteady frame and legs might not alarm, he seated himself upon its edge. His shoes he tucked under the thin pallet of corn husks that served for his pillow, and then wearily his chin sank into his hands, and with his elbows on his knees, Joey sat crumpled up there in the dark and stared in hopeless abstraction at nothing.

But his mind was busy with a wonderful picture. He was trying to see God, as Ruth in her prayer had spoken of Him.

God was a new thing in Joey's life. It was a strange thing, so strange, so far away and mysterious, and yet so directly compelling in its awful grasp on him that he

would have shrunk down in abject terror had it been other hands than Miss Ruth's that had held forth the light. But because of her he felt safe, though he feared strangely.

"O God, you who see all things, give us — all of us — a little of your divine Light to-night." What was the Light? What was God? What was He like?

Certainly He was very big, for even Miss Ruth was afraid of Him; she bowed her head when she spoke His name. And then He must be very old, because He knew so much. And He couldn't be working, because He had time to sit and see *all things*. All things! That was quite a stretcher. Still Miss Ruth said it, and Miss Ruth ought to know.

Joey visualized Ruth's face with little effort. God, somehow, he could not see.

"If he wuz a woman He'd be like Miss Ruth," was his nearest approach to a decision. "'N' He knows ever'thing."

Everything, Miss Ruth said. Then He must know about Miss Ruth, and John, and Della, and the pair on the floor, and — and — Joey's hands dropped at his side with a start. If He knows about everything, and all the others, He must know — He *must* know, about him, Joey!

Joey thought it over a long time. He was skeptical on that point. How could any one see him there in that dark closet? And yet, how comforting it would be if he could believe that some one did see him, that some one was looking at him there in the dark, that he wasn't

entirely alone, forgotton and unseen! And this some one existed, said Miss Ruth, and He was God.

Who can probe the startled marvellings of the virgin soul reared in the Land of Darkness suddenly glimpsing the Realm of Hope, dazzled and stricken dumb by the wonder of it, skeptical through cruel experience, yet in its deepest, most vital depths exulting, even unconsciously, in the moment's revelation of its kinship with God? Such things are not to be put on paper, or even spoken by word of mouth. They find their expression in finer and more significant effects than these coarse interpretations; they live in actions. Joey, up there in the muggy darkness, child that he was, threw his face down on the mouldy bed and begged for a sight of Something — he knew not what.

The eternal God — need of mankind had stirred in him. He knew nothing; he was blind and in the dark. He could not see or understand; he could only weep and suffer; and so, weeping and suffering, he went to his knees beside the bed, why he knew not, and presently little Joey began to try to pray.

He was afraid to talk out loud, as Miss Ruth had done. The pair on the floor might hear. He wondered if talking aloud was necessary, and deciding to make the best of the situation, he began to whisper and plumped down on his knees beside the bed,

“Mister God, I ain’t wise to you like Miss Ruth, but she sez that you’re wise to all of us, even to a little kid like me. Is that straight, Mister God? Are *yuh*? I don’t believe *yuh* are, meself; but Miss Ruth sez *yuh* are,

and she never sprung a con on me yet. 'N' she sez yuh're watching over ever'thing all the time, 'n' want ev'rybody to do the right thing 'n' be good. 'N' if that's straight, Mister God, I wanna know why yuh don't let me know when I'm so awf'ly lonesome and yuh know how swell it would be for me to have yuh talk to me? Why don't yuh let me know some way that you're list'ning when I'm talking here like this? Can't yuh wise me up a little, mister, so I know that I ain't talking to nothen' but meself? Yuh know a guy don't want to talk when they ain't nobody hearin' him; and how *can* I know, Mister God, that you're hearin' me if you don't put me next some way?"

His lips ceased moving as he stopped to debate with himself the question of how *can* any one know? How could Miss Ruth know? There had been no answer from the One she was speaking to. But she had gone away almost at once after the prayer. That was so. Perhaps she hadn't waited long enough. It must take quite a time, especially with so many praying and keeping Him busy. Perhaps a fellow had to wait some time for his answer. If so, he had better go on and finish.

"I know yuh got a lot to do, Mister God, and perhaps you're too busy to hear me, but if you'd only let me know, an' if I only wuz sure that I wuz 'spielun' to somebody, 'n' it wuz yuh 'n' yuh wuz like what Miss Ruth sez, Mister God, can't yuh see how swell it would be fer me when I get in here alone in the dark, and I can't sleep, and there ain't nobody to talk to, and I'm so — so lonesome, kind-a! I get so awf'l lonesome, Mister God.

There ain't nobody with me, an' nobody to talk to, an' sometimes I feel as if I wuz left out of ever'thing, and ev'rybody; 'cause ev'rybody's got some one with them but me."

Words failed him for a moment and the whisper ceased till the choking feeling in his throat was gone.

"O Mister God! Can't yuh see how it is? Yuh know ever'thing, don't yuh? An' so yuh must know how it feels to be all alone. Jes' think how you'd feel yerself, if yuh was me — O please, Mister God, don't let me be so lonesome; an' let me know if you're hearing me when I'm talking to yuh, as Miss Ruth says, an' then I — I won't be lonesome Mister God, if I know you're hearing. Now, don't forget, will you?" A pause, then: "My name's Joey Bruggers and I live at 49 Clay Court, second floor, rear. S'long."

The whisper stopped for good. For a long time Joey remained on his knees, waiting for an answer. He was both patient and skeptical, yet his own prayer had given him some faith. Since the beginning of time men have made many fine prayers to many gods; but none ever prayed with more poignant yearning in his heart than did this lonely little atom up there in his dark, dirty closet at the end of the second floor hall. He grew very tired. His knees ached, and he was growing cold and sick at the stomach. His street-gamin cynicism told him that it was no use, there wouldn't be any answer, but something, a new feeling that he nourished because there was Hope in it, drove him to wait on.

He grew sleepy. He nodded twice and caught himself

sharply. He continued to wait. He listened eagerly. The snoring of his parents answered him. But there came no answer.

“Huh!” said Joey rising. “I knew it all the time.”

The bed creaked noisily; creaked again after awhile, then all was still. In the bedroom doorway Mr. and Mrs. Bruggers snored, and snored, and snored. In the closet, the mystic silence of complete darkness was punctuated at intervals by a faint, gulping sound. On his ragged bed little Joey Bruggers lay with his face toward the wall and shook to his toes with the heart-tearing sobs of childish disappointment. But he smothered the sobs so his snoring elders might not be disturbed.

CHAPTER XI

THREE are two ways of telling that Sunday has come to Clay Court, beside the startling quiet.

On the second floor of No. 39 a slim girl in a black wrapper stands near the window and combs her hair. Her motion has in it that which signifies all the leisure in the world. Week-days one only glimpses her. She hurries to the window, glances at the mirror that brings her to the front of the room, and with a twist of her white hands coils the thick braids upon her head and is gone. On Sunday she combs, and combs, and combs. Her hair is shiny black. It is a marvel, the attention she can bestow on a single hair. She is not beautiful save for her hair. Her hair must be her single delight. And, like the rest of Clay Court, Sunday is the one day in seven on which she may give herself over single-mindedly to the pursuit of an ideal.

Likewise, on Sunday morning, Dinny Noonan, whose task in life is to polish one of our lamp posts with his shoulder-blades, is late at his post. He appears, heavy eyed and apathetic, about the time when the churches up the Avenue begin to send down to us their ringing blessings of peace and promise. He takes up his labours with a self-commiserative air, as if this polishing lamp posts seven days a week wasn't all that some people

might imagine. By the time he has got himself into his regular attitude, chin on his chest, legs crossed at the knee, hands deep in the pockets, some neighbour steps yawning out of a doorway, invites Dinny down to the corner for a morning drink, and all his labour of posing has gone for naught.

These things I caught as I looked out of my window this fine morning. It was early, and Clay Court does not rise early on Sabbath morn. The scene was barren save for Dinny and the girl with the hair.

Later a few stragglers begin to show themselves at windows, in doorways, and on the walk, their appearance speaking eloquently of how the previous evening was spent. Everybody is sleepy, and shows it, and here and there one already hears a quarrel in the process of warming up after Saturday night. The proper costume is trousers and undershirts, and wrappers and uncombed hair, while the proper thing to do for the while being is to lean dully out of the window and say: "Going to be another hot one to-day." Children begin to come out and cross the street to the grocery and markets. But there is no noise. It is so still that the music of the bells up Avenue has the world to itself.

Wonderful bells! Like great, golden-tongued voices they speak out upon the quiet, Sabbath morn, softly calling the faithful to worship, gently reminding the unregenerate that such a thing as worship exists. Like the voice of a spirit they spread their poetry upon the scene; they seek the dark stairways and float in and up into the grimy rooms; they breathe into the ears of all,

willing and unwilling; they bring their message to all hearts. We pause. We listen. We puzzle about the message. Then we go on our way to Mr. Mehaffey's or Mr. Sodders's and we ponder as we go on how much the bells must cost and what might be bought with the price of them.

Sabbath morning. There is peace. The bells are noble. But the best they can do is to make us think of what might have been.

This Sunday morning however, was different. Even from the height of my wonderful window the sense of something new was obvious. A quiet word had gone around after Rinehart's meeting Saturday night, and men began to appear on the walks at a time when normally the lees of the night before would have been the rule. These men had an aim in their unwonted Sunday morn activity, and their steps led them into strange ways.

In the Tenement there was just one room which had been declared unfit for human habitation even in this quarter, and it was in the rear of the basement. In building the Tenement some one had skimped his work on the rear wall of the foundation so that now, with the original crevices growing wider and longer with the years, the wall was not much more than a sieve, holding back the rank, wet dirt of the alley, but letting the water seep through in dripping, stinking streams. Therefore it was but rarely that the landlord was fortunate enough to find anybody unfortunate enough to be willing to accept this rear basement room as a place to live in.

It was empty now, and, the season being dry, the

water had sunk beneath the rotting boards where it still lay, a black, oily pool covered with green — that squirted up between cracks under pressure of a heavy foot. The rats rejoiced in this room when it was dry. The light of day had not shone on it from the day of its construction. Yet on one of the walls, with a wire around his neck, hung a rusty tin soldier. But the child who had played with the soldier was gone.

To this room, from the freshness and peace of a fine Sunday morning, men came one by one to the number of twenty. Their mode of entry was like that of men who do not court observation. A man would stand on the walk near the basement entrance, looking up and down the street, apparently with a whole forenoon before him in which to do nothing. Then suddenly he would disappear, and the next moment would find him knocking at the door below. The door opened, and closed behind him, and a voice in the darkness called gruffly:

“Hello, brother.”

“H’lo. Many here yet?”

“Most of ’em. Rinehart hasn’t come, though.”

“He’ll come at ten, won’t he?”

“Ten, sharp.”

“Be something doing to-day, eh?”

“Wait for Rinehart.”

A dark passage way ran back to the room at the rear. Here was another door, standing half open for the time being, and, in the room, a group of men. Two oil lamps served for light, but the gloom of the place was too dense, too complete, for any light to make a great impression.

The white faces level with the lights, shone out like heads suspended in the air. Boxes and beer kegs served for seats, and near one of the lamps a keg of that size technically known as a half-barrel was reserved as a stand for the speaker. The odour of stale beer mingled with the mouldiness.

The men spoke in whispers; the water dripped, plunk, plunk, plunk, from the pipes along the roof. But the sense of tension was fresh and alive.

At ten sharp came Rinehart, with his hat down over his eyes. The door was closed behind him and a bolt shot home. The crowd grew still. Only the water dripped, plunk, plunk, plunk. Rinehart turned the lamps up until they smoked, and without a word sprang upon his keg, looked around, rubbed his hands, and began:

“I promised you a surprise and I’ll make good. Some of you know about it, some of you don’t. Before I’m through this morning you’ll all know; and you’ll all be brothers, or be marked for the cowards and suckers that you are. Listen: I’ll tell you fellows a little bit of news. You’ve been too independent this campaign. Didn’t know that, did you? Well, it’s so. Been too independent. Haven’t got out and hip — hip — hoorayed for the swell guys’ candidates. You’ve stayed at home and stuck your hands in your pockets and said, ‘Aw hell, what’s the use? I don’t get anything out of it anyhow,’ when anybody’s told you to get excited. You haven’t done that enough to do you any good, but just enough to do you a little harm. If you’d do it enough, there’d been a change in the campaign tune. But you’ve

only done it enough *to be noticed!* Get that? You've been stool-pigeoned on and the rich guys know about your lack of interest. Too independent. So you're going to be taught a lesson. How? Why the way they learn you every four years whenever you need pulling up. Wage-cuts. Lock-outs. Lay-offs. That's it. Pretty soon you'll see in some corporation paper that, *owin'* to the uncertainty of the election, the railroads are laying off ten thousand men. And all the big works are shutting down till they see who's going to be President. And you poor devils who're thrown out of work will yank your hands out of your pockets and begin to hustle to help elect the man the rich guys want.

"That is, you used to do it. You'd be doing it this year, too, if you wasn't next. But being as you are, you're too wise, and we ain't going to do anything of the sort, because we're going to have a nice little party of our own."

His eyes flashed over them with a light in which there were things that were not good to see.

"Yes; we're going to have a party of our own." He showed his teeth in what he meant to be a smile. "Our Little Surprise Party, we'll call it — a regular little surprise."

Another pause. He loved these pauses, did Rinehart.

"Brothers, did you ever see a bomb?"

They started guiltily, as if he had bared their secret thoughts.

"Ah!"

"Ah!" echoed Rinehart. He nodded with tight,

smiling lips, anticipating and answering the obvious question with that gesture. "We won't say anything about it, brothers, won't say anything out loud. But we understand. We're all next. It's all arranged. Don't worry. I won't say any more; I'm just —"

"Windy!"

It was shocking. The crowd jumped.

Mr. Perkins, the sullen and forceful Mr. Perkins, suddenly raised his rumbling voice and interrupted Rinehart, even as Rinehart's disciple had interrupted Ruth on the night before.

"'Windy,' I said," repeated Mr. Perkins. "You're a bag of wind."

He was standing back near the wet wall, lazily hanging on to an overhead gas-pipe with his hairy right hand, the fingers playing upon the pipe as if anxious of gripping something else. He was a formidable gentleman to look at, and his interruption, coming like an unexpected thunder-slap, was very much akin to a bomb, such as Rinehart was talking about. He grinned with great contempt at Rinehart's consternation, and Rinehart, shocked out of glib speech, stared severely at the villain, trying to put him to flight. Mr. Perkins, however, refused to flee in the least. He laughed instead. Never, never had Rinehart been treated thus!

"What's your idea, brother?" he snapped finally.

"Brother, your eye!" roared Perkins. "If you was a brother of mine I'd be ashamed of my mother. Windy was what I said. D'you get it now? You're a bag of wind."

"I am, am I?"

"I said you was."

"Well, you're pretty—" Rinehart prepared to launch forth into scathing denunciation, but a sneaking glance around at his audience prompted him to pause. It was not to be all Rinehart this morning. He saw it in the eyes of his followers. Perkins with his rude, unsympathetic remark had broken the spell.

"Well, what do you mean? What'd you say it for, brother?"

"Don't you call me 'brother.'" Perkins let go of the gas-pipe. "Don't *you* call me that." He scowled around like a man who is looking for trouble, which probably was just the case. All night long Perkins had sat in the little bedroom of his two-room flat with a stinking kerosene lamp at his elbow. The baby lying in bed beside the prostrate mother wailed at intervals. Perkins rose wearily and gave it medicine from a bottle, medicine which the doctor had confessed would do it no good, but would "stop its crying." In the morning Ruth came down and took his place. And without sleeping or eating he had come from the bedroom down into the basement for his first "secret meeting."

"Don't call me 'brother,'" he growled, turning to Rinehart. "I'm no kin of yours; I ain't even of the same race. I'm an American of the old-fashioned kind, and — God knows what you may be; I don't."

He spat toward the keg on which Rinehart stood.

"You're full of wind, I said. You get up here and shoot off your mouth; and if it came down to cases and

there was any chance of getting a copper's bullet through your head, you'd be hiding back in some alley, waiting for the thing to blow over and give you another chance to talk. Yes, you would — Hold on, now!" His right arm flew out in a vicious gesture as Rinehart would have interrupted. "Listen to me. I've made up my mind that I got something to say to you, and you listen to it, and take it in and think it over, 'cause it'll do your dirty black heart a lot of good."

His voice filled the room. And now a careful observer might have noticed this — that his voice was not made for speech in such places as this. It was too big, too free. Rinehart, he was made for this work, to hide and half-whisper in basement meeting places; but Perkins came of another breed, the light-haired breed which has talked when, where, and how it pleased, though the head goes off the shoulders for it. He was defying Rinehart, bullying him. The crowd saw it. He was defying them, too; but they let him go on.

"I'm an American," said Perkins, "a good American; an' that's come to be a hell of a name to call a fellow in these days. Don't think for a minute that you're list'ning to one of your kind, Rinehart, when you're list'ning to me. My daddy was helping Lincoln lick —"

"Yah! Lincoln! What would Lincoln say —"

"Shut up; you ain't fit to call him by name. Shut up, I tell ye. I got somethin' to say an' you got to hear 'em.

"I'm a good American, too damn good an American.

I was born an' raised in a house where we used to think of church an' the flag in about the same way — only more so. I've seen dad fight an' I've fought, 'cause some one slurred th' flag; an' he nor me never did that for any church. He used to baste the waddin' out of me if I didn't know my piece Decoration Day. You don't understand that. That's a kind of American you don't know, an' couldn't be.

"Well, I was going to say: I got next. I went up against the game that my dearly b'lov-ed land of the free hands out to its people. It ga'me a jar. I knew it couldn't be so — not here in these United States. 'By God,' I sez to myself first time I had to work for pay below decent living wages, 'there's something wrong here,' sez I, 'n I hollered about it. Told 'um I couldn't raise my kids decent on what they wuz giving me. 'Go to hell, then,' sez they. I went. I been there ever since.

"But I'm a good American, don't you forget that; an' that's just why I'm in this game with you fellows, because I am such a good American. I think too much of this country, my daddy's country, an' my granddad's, an' wife's an' my kids,' to keep out of it. It's a good country, but it's got to be kicked in the face an' waked up. It's all right naturally but it's gone all wrong. Like a girl gone tuh the bad. It's letting money do what it wants tuh with it. By the Almighty, when I think o' what this country was — what I was told it was, as a kid — Liberty, Star-spangled Banner, hats off to the Flag; an' what it's done an' what it's made people do for

it, an' then think of what it is *now*, I see red'n want tuh run right into the middle of it an' hit some one an' say, 'Wake up here an' see what these United States are getting to be!"'

They cheered his viciousness here; but by his words he had placed himself alone.

"Yessir, that's what I feel like; an' that's what's got to be done. Don't think I'm in with you guys who take a shot at a President an' throw bombs. I ain't. You don't care for this country. You'd as soon see it go smash as not, I know. But I do care for it. Why, I'm as good an American as the President himself, 'n' I'd get up'n help hang bomb tossers just as quick as he would or any one else. An' I'd help tie a can to you fellows, if ever come to that. Because, in spite of the shame of it, I'm a good American."

The fire in his eyes held them bound, and the wicked hang of his big shoulders, the swing of his long arms, and the great heavy hands at the end of them, arms and hands that could become in the wink of an eyelid machinery to launch a blow that would crush a man's face in, silenced the few tongues that might have sought to break the spell.

"An' I'm going to do my best to help my country like my granddad and my daddy before me, an' the best I can do is to help you raise hell. This country's decent mostly. Oh, yes, it is! Don't tell *me!* I know something about it — something about it outside of city hells like this — an' you don't. It's all right; but the decent part's asleep. It's let the raw deal get the start of it.

When it suddenly discovers that its free'n equal citizens, and good Americans to boot, are getting such a raw deal at the hands of Industry that they're wild enough to fight because they're out of work and food, it'll wake up like it did in '61 — and a first-class house cleaning will be the first act on a new programme. That's why I'm with you, because I'm a good American; 'n' if you don't like it you can go plumb to hell."

"You are a man, brother!" cried Rinehart. He was quick to turn defeat into victory, was Rinehart.

The giant nodded grimly.

"Take it or leave it; suit yourself," he muttered sullenly.

"Do you hear?" continued Rinehart, to the others, ignoring the giant's defiance. "It is the time. The hour is ripe. It must be done!"

"What?" snapped Perkins.

Rinehart went on as if he had not heard: "The appointed hour has arrived. We'll give 'em a surprise. Yes, brothers, they'll remember this election because our Little Surprise Party took a hand."

Perkins turned away. Shouldering his neighbour out of his path, he went straight to the door, jerked it open with unnecessary violence, and strode out of the room, through the dark passage to the front, up the stairs, and into the open air.

On the walk he stopped and bared his head to the slight breeze. The church bells were ringing again, ringing softly, and Perkins, his long arms hanging listlessly at his sides, his head on one side, stood for a moment bareheaded and listened to the sweet-toned message of

Peace, Peace, Peace, Peace. There were many bells.
And it was very still.

Perkins listened, perhaps, for half a minute. Then he laughed in a way that was a curse, put on his cap and made straight for Mehaffey's saloon.

"What the — ! You drinking?" quoth the bartender. "I thought you'd been to church."

"Sure," said Perkins, throwing his money on the bar.
"And the sermon beat whiskey all hollow."

CHAPTER XII

SO CLAY COURT opened its Sabbath, and as it rained for awhile near noon the rest of the day was spent in-doors.

Clay Court usually does spend its Sunday in-doors. There are parks, it is true, in the city, and on its outskirts open spaces galore. But that takes car-fare. Clay Court has other uses for its car-fare than to fly out for a breath of air on Sunday, and, beside, Clay Court knows nothing about flying.

It knows that on Sunday it may stay in its cage; that the streets are purgatory; the homes hell; and that there is one sure, swift, easy way to escape from all the torture. Clay Court sits in the kitchen and drinks beer out of the can. By three in the afternoon it is full in the crop, if it is lucky. By seven this condition has mounted to the head, though this also is dependent upon the whim of Fortune, which controls small change. At nine the quarrelling begins; by midnight the worst has been told; and on Monday morning many of the bread-winners are late to work, and the Sabbath has left wreckage rather than rest behind it. All this is as natural as the conduct of the cave dweller who huddled in his unsanitary cave and stared at the fire for recreation.

There always is considerable excitement. Drinking

flat beer on under-nourished stomachs is not good for the heart or brains of man or woman. Wherefore it is on Sunday that the Terrible Things happen in Clay Court: the patrol wagons come clanging down the Avenue; head lines rise in the Monday papers; and comfortable citizens throw up their hands and cry, "Oh, the utterly uncivilized brutes!" Really, there is nothing quite so illuminative as a week spent in Clay Court during the hot weather.

Mrs. and Mr. Bruggers, the worthy parents of our little Joey, did much as their neighbours did, so long as their money lasted. This Sabbath, Mrs. Bruggers awakening in the middle of the forenoon, and sleepily and with befuddled senses gazing around her to ascertain the exact location of her whereabouts, gradually discovered that she was not in bed, and being both amazed and angered by the discovery, resorted to her usual procedure when so moved. She called loudly "Bruggers!"

Mr. Bruggers, being, as if it were, still heavily weighted down with the previous evening's dissipation, was at first unable to reply. But at the second and fiercer call, and after some squirming he managed to respond in a muffled voice: "My love?"

"Where are you?" demanded Mrs. Bruggers, indignantly. "Why don't you show yourself?"

The reason for this was of course the simple one that Bruggers was lying face down under the wife of his bosom.

Mr. Bruggers squirmed some more. Then as his

senses grew clearer his condition became more and more apparent to him, and after awhile he realized his situation.

“My love — ” he began timidly.

“Well?” Mrs. Bruggers’s voice was growing clearer, and fiercer.

“If you’ll pardon me, my love — ”

“Well?”

“I believe — ”

“What do you believe? Where are you?”

“I believe — I believe, my love, that I’m under you!”

Here Mrs. Bruggers suddenly rolled herself to one side, and Bruggers, a very dilapidated Bruggers, slowly drew a long noisy breath and said: “Ah!”

“Bruggers!” The female master of the house was sitting up and viewing her weaker half with an unsteady but significant stare.

“My love — ?”

“What were you doing there?”

“I — I — sleeping, I think, my love.”

Mrs. Bruggers, preparing to launch into a terrible tirade, discovered that her tongue was hopelessly dry.

“Bruggers,” she hissed, handing him a quarter. “Go out and get a half-pint; and if you so much as smell of it before you get back I’ll skin you alive. You hear?”

By one o’clock the precious pair were nearing the stage they so much desired, and Joey breakfasted on the scraps left over from last night. At two came some company, a frizzled Mrs. Rambo, widow, and a frowzy Mr. Dolan, widower. Mrs. Bruggers greeted them mightily.

“Mrs. Rambo! How are you?”

“Sick,” said Mrs. Rambo. “I’m never well any more — not since I got that pantomime poison from them sardines Mr. Dolan brung me.”

“They was good sardines,” said Mr. Dolan, sitting down firmly. “They was good sardines.”

“You can say that,” said the widow significantly. “They didn’t poison you.”

“You et ‘em all,” said Mr. Dolan. “I didn’t get none.”

“Well you brung ‘em for me, didn’t you?”

“I did, and you et ‘em, too.”

“And paid for it ever since — Well, ah, well, a delicate person must be careful; eh, Mrs. Bruggers? They can’t stand what some can, can they?”

“Say not,” said Mrs. Bruggers. “Now, me; to look at me you’d never think how delicate I am — ”

“Bruggers!” said Mr. Dolan, suddenly. “Got a can?”

“Why — yes.”

“A can for beer?”

“Sure.”

“Bruggers!” It was Mrs. Bruggers who spoke now.

“My love?”

“Go — go at once, yourself. Can’t you see poor Mrs. Rambo is starving for a little drink? Hurry now.”

And poor Bruggers hurried enthusiastically away, his “Yes, my love,” coming back to them jerkily, as if shaken from a bottle, as he clattered out of the door.

“It’s a blessed hot rain; but I held my hat over the can,” said he when he returned.

“Bully boy!” said Mr. Dolan, reaching for the can.
“Bully boy!”

Half an hour rolled away, and with it several cans. Mr. Dolan slipped his arm around Mrs. Rambo, and the lady giggled with becoming modesty. Even Mrs. Bruggers melted toward Bruggers.

“Bruggers,” she said amiably, “sing um a song.”

“My love!” protested Bruggers with true artistic reluctance.

“Sing um that old one, about the preacher’s wife,” commanded Mrs. Bruggers.

“But, my love, my voice!”

“Go on!” roared Dolan, whereupon Bruggers, looking at the ceiling with an expression of infinite shrewdness, and beating time with his glass, began in his high, cackling voice:

“Come, all ye lads and lassies, and listen to my song,
If you’ll pay good attention it won’t be very long.
It’s about an adventure, something that did befall
The young and handsome helpmeet of old Reverend McCall.”

“Hooray! Bully boy!” cried Mr. Dolan, slapping his neighbour’s ample back, and Joey could bear no more. He was sick at heart and ashamed, too bitterly ashamed to remain and witness the further degradation of his parents. He was choking. He wanted to cry out and beg them to stop, to think what a spectacle they were making of themselves; but he had done so once and the memory of the beating he had received for being “better than your own parents” was with him still. He went out into

the hall, clinched his little fists, and kept the tears from coming. How he longed for a chance to talk with Ruth then! She would have talked of the things he wished to hear. He could have told her how what was going on in the room had hurt him, and she could have told him why. But the Perkins baby was worse, and Ruth was busy, caring for the infant, and for the fear-maddened mother. Then Joey thought of Old Mag on the floor above.

"I'll go see Mag," he said to himself. "She knows Miss Ruth, and she's sick so she can't be jagged.

CHAPTER XIII

OLD Mag was the woman whom the superintendent had thrown out of the finishing-room of the Factory a few days before. She wasn't old in years — a little over thirty — but she was a discard, nevertheless. What would have become of her but for Ruth is a problem altogether too unpleasant to consider here; but at all events, Ruth had taken her under her sheltering wing, and Mag, to substantiate the superintendent's eagle-eyed judgment — "You ain't fit for anything but to be in bed, and here you're trying to draw wages on us!" — promptly gave way to the malady that was robbing her of her strength and went to bed.

"I'll be up in a couple of days," she said, confidently. "It's just a spell. I'll be hunting another job in a day or two."

But the days came and went, and still she lay there. The doctor likewise had come and gone, and after his departure Ruth had consecrated herself to a consistent programme of deceit. When she was in the room Old Mag grew strong; when she went away the poor old face on the pillows seemed to shrivel even smaller, and the eyes were dead and without hope.

Under Ruth's régime the room was remarkable for the fact that it was clean. On the little table there always

managed to be a flower or two, and upon them Old Mag divided the long, lonely hours when Ruth must be away. It was almost quiet, too, that room, for it seemed that the noises from the Tenement and the street, instead of rolling harshly through the screens, halted at the windows and remained outside, or, at the worst, came in on tip-toes, like bad boys abashed in a gentle atmosphere. The regular tenement odour had vanished in the face of perfect cleanliness; and here Old Mag lay at peace, a tiny patch of untroubled backwater slipped into a turbulent, muddy torrent.

Joey didn't knock. He pushed the door open a little and peeped in.

"H'lo, Mag."

"H'lo, Joey."

"Care'f I come in?"

"I should say not. Come on in. How's everything?"

Joey came in and closed the door. "How you feeling, Mag?"

"Oh, I'm all right. How you?"

"All right."

"I heard you wuz sick."

"Naw." Joey shook his head stubbornly. "Naw."

"Too bad it rained, ain't it?" volunteered Mag. "Spoiled yer Sunday. Ye'ver notice how it always rains Sundays?"

"Naw. Does it?" asked Joey, greatly interested.

"Seems like to me't does."

"Huh!" Joey sat down. "That ain't fair."

"What ain't fair?"

“Raining Sundays.”

“Oh!”

“What makes it rain Sundays, Mag?”

“Ha, ha! ‘Cause that’s yer day off.”

Joey sat silent, his great eyes growing greater as he pondered this last answer. It was too deep for him.

“But’t hadn’t oughto.”

“No. Lot’s o’ things hadn’t oughto. They do jes’ the same. You have to stay in the house when it rains, too.”

“Sure.” Joey pondered some more. “Who makes it rain Sundays.”

“I don’t know, Joey. God makes it rain — he makes it rain Sundays.”

“Naw!” Joey’s protest was as eager as it was sharp. “God don’t do it. He wouldn’t do anything like that. You ask Miss Ruth; she’ll tell you.”

Joey sat up on the edge of the chair, his eagerness almost carrying him off on the floor.

“She says He’s got a soft spot for us guys who work all week, and *He* wouldn’t spoil our only day off. *He* shoots the rain on week-days, but nix on Sunday. On —” Joey paused, and broke out shrewdly, “Say, Mag, God lays off Sundays like the rest of us. Sure, He can’t be working all the time, either. That’s how it come to rain to-day. God ain’t there, and the other fellow puts the day on the bum. Ain’t I right, Mag?”

“Why — why, I don’t know, Joey,” said Mag, bewildered. “Mebbe, Joey, mebbe.”

“Why, sure. Sure.” He wagged his head confidently.

“Sure. *He* wouldn’t put the day on the bum for *us*. Should say not.”

He sat silent for awhile, and Mag, too startled to follow his line of reasoning, lay and stared at him with never a word. Joey’s elbows came up on his knees, and the little chin dropped into the weary hands.

“Mag,” he said suddenly, not looking up.

“Hah?”

“Y’ever get jagged?”

“Hah?”

“Like ma?”

“Should say not.”

“Why does ma get jagged, Mag?”

“Why — why, I dunno, Joey. Some folks does; some doesn’t.”

“Well, why don’t you?”

Mag raised herself on an elbow and almost sat up in bed at this. She stared at Joey for a full minute, stared at him with the blank eyes of one to whom has been propounded a line of thought so new, so original, so startling, as to overthrow the mental habits of a lifetime. Then she dropped back.

“Joey, not saying a word against your ma, I must say that I never was that kind of a girl.”

Mag’s thin lips closed with a snap, and there was silence. Joey hitched around on his chair, the puckering of his little old brow betraying his nervousness.

“Well — why is ma, Mag?” he burst out in agony.
“Hah?”

Old Mag relaxed into a gay little titter. “Goodness

knows, Joey. Some folks is; some isn't. But most is, I guess; most is."

"A wonder," groaned Joey, "she won't be good."

"Good? Why, sakes, kid, you don't want to go saying your ma ain't good!"

"She ain't, she ain't, she ain't!" cried Joey, the agony of his tormented young soul bursting forth in the wail. "She ain't good. She ain't like God. She ——"

"Like God? Like God?" Again Mag rose on her elbow. "What — what d'you want?"

"She's like the rest of 'em. They ain't nobody good. All they wanto do is to booze, an' holler, an' fight, an' hate each other, 'n make me wisht I wuz dead. They don't wanta be good. They don't care anything 'bout God. Oh, I don't see what fun they have the way they do — An' then the can an' the bottle takes most the money 'n we don't get 'nough to eat. And suppose they was good. We'd all have a cinch, wouldn't we? Ain't I right?"

"Mebbe, Joey; mebbe you are."

"Why, sure. Did y'ever hear Miss Ruth tell about it? She was telling last night — down't the Park. Says, 'You can't never be happy unless you're good.' Mebbe't ain't so, too. Gee! Look at ma and pa, and everybody 'round here; they ain't good an' they're sore all the time. An' Miss Ruth is good, an' you only got to look at her to know how swell it is to be like her. Don't you think God looks something like Miss Ruth, Mag?"

"Goodness sakes, Joey! He ain't no woman."

"I know, but —" he stopped abruptly. To explain

what was in his heart was too much for him. He knew what it was well enough, but the words were not his. "I wish I knew something," he said. "Mag, why don't other folks be like Miss Ruth?"

"Goodness, Joey; they can't many be like her. She ain't no common person, and she wasn't brought up here, neither. She was a swell young dame when she was a-growing up, and went to school and all that."

"Sure." There was a brooding silence. "Mag, if you'd been a swell young dame when you was growing up, and had went to school and everything, you'd be like her, too, eh?"

"Who? Me? Shucks!"

"An' if I was going to school I might know something, an' I might be good. Can't be good, now; don't know how." He retreated sullenly into himself. "I got to be like the rest, hain't I?"

"You're a good boy, Joey."

"I want to be. Ain't no fun being bad. It's wrong, too. I get scared; I don't see how folks dast be bad. Some of 'em's 'fraid o' the coppers, but I ain't. Something else I'm 'fraid of. Bigger'n any copper."

"What is it?"

"Dunno. I prayed last night, Mag,"

"Did ye?"

"Eyah. But I didn't get no satisfaction."

"Why?"

"Don't know enough. I couldn't see anything. Miss Ruth can. She knows."

"Wait till you're older, Joey; then you'll see."

"Aw — gee! Think so?" For an instant the little old face, lighted up with the holy fires of hope, was young and beautiful to see. Then the fire went out like a light that is snuffed, and the oldness came back to its own. "Naw, I won't." His voice was weary and dead. "I won't see anything. I'll be like pa, or Dolan, an' all of 'em."

"Oh, no, no, Joey! You won't. You can't. It ain't in you. You won't grow up like that any more'n a — any more'n a flower'll grow up to be a garbage box. Them things is all fixed, Joey. You wuz meant to be good. When you get big you'll be swell, and you'll have a bunch o' coin, and you won't chase the can or hit th' bottle — 'r beat up yer wife — no, you won't, Joey; you ain't made that way. An' you'll know a lot; I can see it'n your eyes. Honest, Joey, I b'lieve you're wiser now'n most grown folks. Grown folks don't know so much."

"Gowan," said Joey bitterly. "I don't know nothin'. An' I won't get swell an' all that you said, neither. I know — But I won't rush the can — no. Nix. Mag, I wish I could make pitchers."

"Snap shots?"

"Nah. Like what they have outside the Dime Museum. An' I wisht I knew what God looked like. Then I'd make a pitcher of Him, an' show it to people — to ev'rybody — an' then they'd all be good — after they see it. See?"

"I guess so."

"Sure you do." He dropped his high-held head in a

way more eloquent than any words can be. "What's the use?" The shrug of his bony shoulders was centuries old. "What chanct?"

"Aw, Joey! You hadn't oughto say that. Why — why — you're young — you're *young*."

"I know," grunted Joey stubbornly. "I *know*. I prayed, but I didn't get no satisfaction. That's the give-away."

"Joey! You mustn't feel like that! Why, goodness sakes, kid, you hain't had no practice — what you 'xpect without no practice! Why — why look, Joey, Miss Ruth's had practice all her life. You didn't expect to get satisfaction like her at the very start — did you?"

Joey thought it over for a moment. "That's so," he agreed. "Mebbe it does take practice."

"Why, sure. Keep trying. Keep — keep on hoping. You're gone if you don't hope, Joey; you got hope when you're young, 'cause that's your chanct. Why — 'You ain't got no chanct!' Shame on you, Joey. Shame on you."

"Aw — all right," said Joey, brightening a little. "I'll try it again. D'you ever pray, Mag?"

"I'm old, Joey. Say, now, don't forget; you gotto keep on trying. Remember."

"D'y' ever think I'll know what He looks like?"

"Well —"

"So I c'n make the pitcher, I mean?"

Mag thought for a long time. Rather, for a long time she searched for words to express what was in her mind.

"Why, sure," she said, finally. "Sure you'll know.

Some day — you almost know now — how to make it.
The pitcher, I mean."

Joey nodded his little old head. "Some day, p'raps —
Mag, you don't know yourself, do you?"

"I'm 'fraid not, Joey."

"Why don't you? You're good."

Mag smiled a wonderful smile then, a smile of such patience, humility, and sweetness as is seen only on the faces of helpless poor women. Oh, the heart-tugging smiles on those withered faces! The silent acceptance of every imposition, every cruelty that the world sees fit to put upon them; the tale of a life of oppression, without one ray of hope, one kindness from man, or one sign from God. And still they smile, still they are patient. Surely the angels are misnamed. They are not those comfortable full-bodied figures that trumpet the celestial skies. If angels there are, they are the spirits of those shrivelled little sisters with the starved, patient eyes and the humble smile — the worked-out, decent women of the poor.

"It's hard to say why, Joey," said Mag, slowly. "You see — some folks don't have much chance to see Him. Shops and basements and such places, Joey; not such awful good places. It's like there wasn't room for Him there."

She was looking at Joey, but she seemed not to see him at all. And Joey made no more noise than a silent mouse, for he saw that Mag felt like talking, and her words went straight to his heart.

"Where was there room for Him?" continued Mag in

a voice that no longer was all gentle. "It's a cinch it wasn't in that basement on Boston Avenue where I was born, and where I learned to hate my father for beating me. There wasn't much chance for anything fancy in that way there. One room, and that way at the end of the hall in the basement; and father making me chase the can when he had money and so drunk nights that I was afraid to go into the house. Where did I sleep? On the stairs, going down, with other kids and the men who were too drunk to get up. Funny to think how that was, Joey; and here I am talking to you about it, as if I'd never slept on stairs or run for beer for my father. How things change, don't they? — Father? They took him away for beating mother too much. The landlord squealed because ma was hollering too often; and then ma and I began to sew — About five I guess I was then; and I been sewing ever since. We was on vests — take 'em home — all the time then. Sweat shops after that, and there ain't much God in a sweat shop, Joey; only the foreman — Why, I declare, I'm gabbing your head off, ain't I?"

"Go on; tell me," begged Joey.

"We used to fool the church people when they come around. Ma used to hide me: 'No kids here.' Oh, she was smart, ma was, except with pa. He could get ahead of her every time. 'No, I ain't got a cent for you,' she'd say — he was boning her for beer money all the time. Then he'd put his arm around her, and after awhile she'd own up and give him the money. 'Course when he died it got better. He died away from home; we never

saw him again after they took him away that time. And we sewed, ma and me.

“I don’t know how long it was before ma died, but she was coughing the awfulest time, I remember. Sweat-shop cough. Lots of them has it; but ma was small and weak, anyhow, and she didn’t last as long as some. ‘Mag,’ she used to say, ‘keep straight, but don’t you marry no man that drinks’; and I kept both promises. She was in bed, then, and I was pretty near left alone, but I kept my word.

“I wasn’t home when she died. I was at the shop and when I come home there was no light in the room and I knew right away that something was wrong. She was the ’fraidest thing of the dark you ever saw, ma was, and she used to have me set the lamp right near her bed on a chair so she could light it when it got dark, even if she couldn’t get up. But this night it wasn’t lit. And I went in and I says — remember it plain’s if it was yesterday — ‘Hello, ma,’ I says, and she didn’t answer. ‘Hello, ma,’ again. Then I run over to the bed and grabbed her hand, and it was so cold it froze me — Then I lit the lamp myself, and ma was dead, and she had a match in her hand, all ready to light the lamp — I can remember it plain’s if it was yesterday. Ah, Joey, run along, ’cause I see you want to go. ‘Tain’t no fun listening to old women’s gabbing.”

But Joey sat as if hypnotized in the chair. “And so you never saw Him?” he broke out.

“No, no.”

“Never?”

"No." Mag's lips trembled a little. "You see, I kept on sewing until I heard I could get more money over to the Factory. Then I went there. Don't know how long, but it was a long time. And then I got sick." A pitiful attempt at a smile framed itself upon Mag's lips. "So — no, I can't say I know much about what He looks like, Joey."

Joey nodded gravely. He understood, but again he could not express himself. He sat staring at Mag in a way that made her uneasy, then abruptly he leaped to his feet.

"I gotto be going," he explained.

"Joey," called Mag, feebly beckoning with a hand on which there were only three fingers.

"Eyah?"

"There's a banana there on the table. Go on, now; take it. No, I don't want it. It's for you. I wisht I had two for you, Joey."

She watched him as he peeled the fruit with avid fingers.

"Are you feeling all right, Joey?" she asked. "You look just a little ailing."

Joey started for the door.

"I'm all right," he said, with a bite of banana in his mouth. "Sure, I'm all right. S'long."

And the door closed behind him and Old Mag was left alone to reflection over Joey's wonderful ideas.

CHAPTER XIV

MR. DICKY CLEWS was Ruth's dear friend. She loved and revered Ruth for being all that she was not. Ruth's removal to Clay Court was a blow to her.

"The dear, dear girl!" she wailed. "Just think of *her*, our incomparable Ruth, *living* over there. Think of *that* girl among *those* people. Oh, it's too awful to think about."

She resolved with all the strength of her soul that she would make a journey to the Tenement and beg Ruth to give it up. But the day set for the event turned out to be rudely warm, and Mrs. Clews decided that it would be just too awful over there in that district. For which Mrs. Dicky Clews was not to be blamed one little bit.

When she heard from Dicky of my proposed expedition of discovery into the district, she alighted upon me with all the impetuosity of her charming nature. I must—I simply must—make Ruth understand that nothing could save her, Mrs. Clews's, life from utter desolation but for her, Ruth, to go motoring with her Sunday evening.

"She'll come, she'll come even to help me if you do your duty and deliver my message as I have given it to

you," said Mrs. Dicky. "Tell her — tell her that I will be unhappy for days if she doesn't come with you and make up the four for a ride up north. That will bring her; I know Ruth Arthur."

It seemed she did, for Ruth agreed to go.

She was not in her room at the time appointed, but I knew where to find her. Down in Perkins's two-room back cave she had gone for a last few minutes' watch of the baby, and the baby being quiet and apparently much better she came out of that hole with something like joy upon her countenance. But it must have been very dark in there after she had gone.

Sunday evening in Clay Court the tenement boils and bubbles over into the street with sweltering life. The hot streets, under the hot shades of night, remain as purgatories, the stones heated during the day to torture during the night. The tenements within are hell. Every window is an opening where faces, young and old, crowd together gasping for air. The cheeks of the women are a slimy gray, and their eyes are wild, half mad with the torture of their daily life. The young children moan and tear at their feverish bodies. One of them, a little mite of a girl, tosses on the damp blocks in the street and moans, "Oh, please, ma; please make it cool again." And all the time, as darkness comes on, it seems to grow warmer.

There had been much drinking during the day, and more talk. The rain had stopped and the talk was all out-of-doors. The threatened wage-cut, of course, was the predominant subject. Men cursed the Company and

treated one another to drink with the price of a day's food. Then they grew moody and began to think; and in every eye was the look of pain, of torture, while even the crowded buildings seemed to cry out with the misery they held.

Up the Avenue the church bells began to ring, calling to evening service. You could hear them in the brawling medley if you listened hard, but there was no message in them now; they uttered merely a series of brassy notes, for no message could penetrate into our world. For the world was damned, and its people likewise, and there was no hope. This was what could be heard in Clay Court Sunday night while the bells were calling. "Why do you ring, bells?" one might have asked; and the bells, had they been honest, must have answered: "We ring for the happy part of the world."

For all the world is not like this; all the world is not damned. No, even Clay Court knew, from hearsay, of the places of the blest; and, miracle of miracles! Ruth and I got on a street car and were transported thither in a twenty-minute ride. It took only that long to go to the home of Mrs. Clews, in the world of the fortunate. Or, at least, it was the world of plenty, of more than plenty — of too much.

The world was pleasant here. It was more than pleasant, it was inspiring. It was full of confidence, of hope, and of hopes and dreams realized. All things were pleasing, some beautiful, many wonderful.

Great, proud houses reared their walls, finely fitted and pleasing to the eye, in the midst of spacious

grounds. Correct walks led from correct gateways to doorways which soothed the senses to enter. All was as it should be. The path of life was pleasant. Order and accuracy obtained in spite of superabundance. All things pleased the eye, nothing occurred to offend the ear. Even the night air itself seemed a work of art, purified, laundered, and tempered to make it pleasant to mankind — and his wife.

“Mr. Lord! So good of you!” Mrs. Dicky greeted in a way that was a study in itself. “And you *did* succeed in making our wonderful Ruth come with us. My dear Ruth! Really, you should do this sort of thing more often. Set you up after working so hard among your pets. Must be trying on you over there, my dear, in this hot weather? And as for me — I’ve had nothing but woe all summer. I — I’ve actually lost my Baby. Yes, he’s gone forever. I’ve quite given up hope. We’ve offered a thousand to the police if they bring him back, but no results. Just a week ago to day the dear little love slipped out of the garden — and that was the end of my Baby. Yes; disappeared. Oh, it’s knocked me all up. Every morning I look into his room, and there’s his little cot — empty! Everything always pounds you so when you’re least fit to buck up. ‘Pon my soul I don’t know what I shall do if it doesn’t let up. Here I’ve simply got to stay in town for another week. Think of that! And all on account of Dicky here and his insane ambition.”

“Haw, haw!” laughed Dicky. “Haw, haw! You can hike if you like, y’know.”

"Daresay." Mrs. Dicky's black eyes spat well-bred fire. "But *you must stay, of course.*"

"Of course," said Dicky. "Haw, haw! *Of course.* Business y'know, Miss Arthur, business. And who so cruel as to desert the struggling hubby on the field of business battle. Who, indeed? Not the present incumbent, b'gad. Haw, haw!"

At this Mrs. Dicky's beautiful back suddenly stared her Dicky in the face.

"You must excuse him, dear. He's a business man. Perfect slave —"

"I am, really, I am, now, Miss Arthur," interrupted Dicky. "No, no; 'pon my word, Lord, don't laugh. Actually have to stay over the week to vote at the meeting next Saturday. Oh, an awful worry this summer, an awful strain. Got to vote an increased dividend. Have to do it, y'know. Everybody's paying big this year. Have to do it, too. Can't lag behind, y'know; not at the clip the game's running now. Vote a wage-cut Saturday, I understand. Business dropped off a little; got to do something. Oh, I tell you frankly, Lord, it's hard-going for me; and I must say — all respects to the greatly lamented pater — I wish — by Jove, I do — I wish he hadn't chucked such a swath of his filthy luc' into Consolidated Factory — I say, nothing wrong, old man?"

"Not a word," said I.

"Haw! Miss Arthur, won't you feel sorry for me? Pity the poor business slave thing, y'know?"

"Yes, indeed," said Ruth, fervently.

“Haw! Appreciated at last! Haw, haw!” spluttered Dicky.

“Thank goodness!” said Mrs. Dicky distantly. “Here’s the car.”

Another wonder of this wonderful world. An instrument of motion that moved with the rhythm of music, a symphony of transportation. Out of the correct grounds on to the correct boulevard it rolled with the ease of slow flowing water. A slight break in tone, as the speed moved up a notch, then — hmm! — and with the drone of a buzzy bee the asphalt began to flow backward, the panorama of lights, of vistas, of life, began to flash past, and the night air became a breeze of magical effects.

(“Blamed teakettle,” grumbled Dicky. “But I’ll have a *car* for next year. Four makes ordered — to get a good one.”)

Hummm! A curve in the asphalt and the lake ran toward us in a threatening sweep, then, laughing, curved gracefully away. The fresh feel of water in the air, the moonlight on the waves — little blinking waves; the sense of mastery over all the landscape. It was magic, sheer magic.

“Rotten long ride,” said Dicky.

The Park, cool, dark; punctuated with lights that shone on green leaves and grass, and on the people on benches. Then more of the easily flowing asphalt; the wonderful panorama of links and shadows; and long stretches of the wonderful, silver-specked lake that heaved and moved only enough to make perfect the picture; and overhead, the heavens, the garden of stars,

in full bloom. And always there was the night rushing up to meet us, and the fresh air!

“Bet you what you like we break down in a dry district,” offered Dicky generously. He was striving desperately to illumine the evening. Mrs. Dicky apathetically took the wager.

“Though you never pay,” she added.

“Haw, haw!” said Dicky. Then, being smitten by inspiration, “Double it that I do.” Which witticism, with variations, kept him in pleasant conversation for miles. He had almost thought of something just as good when we reached the park.

Another wonder. A playground in keeping with the rest of this wonderful world. It was beautiful. It was all too fine and ideal to belong to a world that held a Clay Court. And when the symphony players began, in perfect tone with the setting about them, the riches below, the wonderful stars above, one might have been pardoned for believing for a moment that the beautiful dreams do come true.

“Really,” confided Mrs. Dicky over her fan to me, “Dicky is getting to be a trial. Heard about his latest idea? No? Not really? Where have you been? He wants to divorce me. Yes, really. Shocking of such a nice little fellow as Dicky, isn’t it? Wants me to go away for the summer — anywhere — then he’ll be a bad Dicky, and I’ll come back and find out all about it and have cause for suing on *indisputable* grounds. Ha, ha, ha! That terrible, scheming little Dicky! I admire him sometimes — almost, really I do.”

"Has our Richard been casting eyes elsewhere, then?" I asked.

"Dicky? Pooh! No, indeed. But he's bored to death. He says, 'A fellow's got to be doing something, y'know — *some* thing — or he'll go stale.' What, oh! what shall I do to him? Hush! Don't — don't laugh, please, here comes our pastor, the Rev. Mr. Danesty. Now watch Dicky polish up his rep' on his reverence."

Dicky had the Rev. Mr. Danesty by the hand.

"Not working this evening, Danesty? Out for a little recreation after strenuous labours — that sort of thing?"

"My pulpit is occupied by Mr. McCoomber, a young pastor awaiting a call, Mr. Clews," replied the Reverend Danesty. "As you say, I am out for an evening of —"

"Yes; that sort of thing. So am I. Terrible strain on me lately, Danesty, terrible strain."

"Ah, you mustn't overwork, Mr. Clews."

"Haw, haw! Trust me," said Dicky. "Awful decent chap, that fellow Danesty," he confided to Ruth as the divine moved on to greet Mrs. Dicky. "Knows his business like a business man. Fine head, bully head. Go into anything and do well. Does well now, I understand. Came to St. James with nothing but his looks; owns quite a handful of stocks now. You can afford to put a bit in the way of a fellow like Danesty, y'know. Haw, haw! I did myself a good turn with him, unloaded a hundred Consolidated Factory on him as a token of esteem. That's a little trouble rid of. Eh? Nothing wrong? Shall I get some —?"

“Nothing,” said Ruth. “Let us — listen to the music, for instance.”

“Music?” said Dicky. “Oh yes — good idea.”

The Rev. Mr. Danesty was approaching Mrs. Dicky.

“Ah! Any news of the—ah—of Baby, Mrs Clews?” he asked solicitously. “I sincerely hope——”

“I don’t any more,” said Mrs. Dicky, nobly resigned. “He’s gone. He’s lost to me. I know it instinctively.”

His Reverence sighed sympathetically. “We must bear up bravely under our sorrows, Mrs. Clews. Idle words, I am aware; but true after all. One doesn’t keep young if one gives way to grief. And not to keep young —” the Rev. Mr. Danesty bowed gallantly — “would be a terrible misfortune for us all who are favoured with your acquaintance, Mrs. Clews. And remember, there is always Hope.”

“No; no more,” said Mrs. Dicky. “But you’re right about the keeping young idea. And you said it so well, your Reverence, you said it very well, indeed. Don’t you think it was well said, Mr. Lord — that is, for a —” Mrs. Dicky shot a playful glance up at Danesty — “for a divine?”

“No one could have said it better, Mrs. Clews,” I agreed. His Reverence beamed with extra pleasure.

“By the way, Mr. Lord,” he said lightly, “I haven’t seen you much lately?”

“No; nor Ruth Arthur, either,” supplemented Mrs. Dicky. “She’s gone crazy over her greasy kids, and I suspect that Mr. Lord is going likewise.”

“Ah, no.” The Rev. Mr. Danesty honoured me with a full four inches of smiling flattery. “Mr. Lord is a man

of the world, and full of experience. He knows the futility of silly theories, and is not foolish enough to waste any of his valuable time."

"No danger of yourself doing that, either; is there, Danesty?"

"Ah! You surely think more of my judgment than to imagine such a thing."

"Yes. No wasting valuable time for you. By the way, Danesty, I heard a sermon last night."

"A sermon?"

"Yes; Miss Arthur was speaking to a crowd of working people. I really wonder how you would look delivering her text."

"What was it?"

"Do to others as you would like them — ' You know what I mean. What are the exact words, Danesty?'"

"I have forgotton," said Mr. Danesty, stiffly. "I am sorry to hear that so accomplished a young woman as Miss Arthur has taken to speaking to the rabble of the streets."

And I rose, laughing, and drove Dicky away from Ruth so we might sit alone.

"Are you glad you came?"

"Yes," said Ruth.

"So am I. And I'm glad we met Danesty."

"Why so?"

"He made me see many things. Now I know why you feel you must go on as you are doing. I wonder who is most in the dark, these poor devils over there in Clay Court, or foolish, good-natured Dicky Clews?"

At last the evening was over. The motor rolled us back, along the wonderful lake, through the park, over the flowing asphalt, to the Clews's residence.

"Actually I dread going home," wailed Mrs. Dicky. "Now I'll have to go past his little room. I'll know that no dear, darling Baby is sleeping on his little cot. I'll awake in the morning, and there'll be no Baby — no cunning little bark to greet me in the morning — nothing! Oh, my dear, I shall go mad. I know I shall if they do not find my Baby!"

She kissed Ruth appealingly. "You'll come and see me again soon won't you, dear. You're a tonic and — and a disinfectant to have around."

"Haw, haw!" said Dicky sleepily. "We 'gree on one thing, present incumbent and myself, jus' one: It's a real hard ol' world to be in. G'night."

Twenty minutes on the jolting cars and we were back in Clay Court.

It was different here. The doorways and sidewalks were full of sleeping men, women, and children — puddles of humanity. Even the streets served as sleeping places, damp and steaming as they were. The roofs were crowded; for the shut-in rooms, the little, cave-like compartments of the great, sweltering brick box, were unbearable dungeons in which no one could abide. Children tossed and moaned a feeble protest. A woman moved over the hot gravel of the roof hunting a breath of air in which to lay her pillow. A man cursed her sleepily as she stumbled over him. The woman moved on in silence. So the Tenement tried to sleep.

Yet the all-seeing stars gleamed hard and dry above, nor did they laugh. The moon, impartial artist of night, gently touched the black ugliness with shimmering white and silver. But Peace there was not. Only there was a twitching rest, in preparation for the remorseless morrow.

News came quickly. A lamp burning quietly in the first floor rear told the story. The Perkins baby was dead.

"And just before it went it held up its little hands and it says: 'Papa!'"

A mere incident. The Tenement said, "Lucky little devil."

"Oh, John!" whispered Ruth in the hall. "This would end if the others knew." She leaned her little head against my arm as we prepared to part, for she was very tired.

"It would," she whispered. "You know it would, don't you?"

And I answered, "Yes." For that seemed the truth, even after the Rev. Mr. Danesty.

CHAPTER XV

JOEY was wrong. He was not all right, as he had stoutly informed Old Mag. When Freddy and Della came to their machines on Monday morning Joey was not among those present.

There is a certain form of test in this Monday morning re-meeting in the Factory. One gets the fag-end of stories by the mere fact of a worker's presence, absence, or appearance. A paster left her bench one Saturday evening with this terse remark to her friends: "Getting married to-morrow, girls. S'long." Monday morning she was back at the bench. "Then he trun you down?" gasped her friends. "I did it," said the girl. "I trun *him* down. The slob! He didn't have the license. 'Skiddo,' I sez, when he sez it don't make no difference. 'I may love you something awful, but I ain't no silly fairy out of a foolish book — Sadie! What did you do; swipe my sleeves?'"

In the matter of absence, among the adults or semi-adults, it may spell comedy of a terribly broad sort, or tragedy, both usually having conception in alcohol. And as for appearance, there is a whole epic in a black eye or a cheap little ring on a little finger. It is on Saturday night and Sunday that things happen for the workers. They live then. And on Monday morning,

stepping back into their places on the grisly mill, they look at one another to see what living may have brought.

Freddy and Della missed Joey first of all. Joey always was there before them, a white little face hopelessly waiting for the ten-hour grind to begin. They knew now that the face had meant something to them, though just what neither would have tried to say.

"He must have overslept," said Della, as she drew the dusty cover from her machine. As the shiny, worn instrument appeared to her, she sat down on her stool and sighed. Another week had begun, another instalment of the weary, endless, round. And here is a strange fact: each Monday the Factory people wish it was Saturday again — wish that they were a week older. Della looked about her with disgust. The Factory was not beautiful. It looked like an unpopulated prison. It always looked so on Monday mornings. The dirty gray covers on the machines suggested shrouds. The dust lay undisturbed on all things. The drear emptiness of the semi-inhabited room was ghastly; and though everybody bustled and lighted gas jets it was unhealthily quiet until the power started. So Della sighed, and Freddy, as if to interpret the very thought in her mind, said:

"Well, we had a touch of high life Saturday eve', yer leddyship."

"Was that what it was?" said Della idly.

"So they say. How'd you like it?"

"Fine!"

Freddy looked a trifle disappointed at the warmth of

her reply but went on: "How would you like to be a merry butterfly among the lights as a regular thing?"

"Fine!" repeated Della.

"Hah?"

"Fine! Swell! I wish't was Sat'day eve' again."

Freddy grew more serious. "You'd like that? — chasing 'round nights to shows, and — and —"

"And swell restirunts. Would I? Oh, maybe I wouldn't just swim in it. Um! Waltz me around again, Freddy! I can just see those swell, funny-coloured lamps in that place we went to, and the swell clothes — Course," (with a shrug) "I wouldn't care to chase 'round without I had swell clothes myself."

"But if you had them, you would?"

"Would I? Well! Think I'm crazy? Would I overlook a good thing?"

"Does that kind of a game look so awful good to you, Dell — that night-game?"

"Why, sure. Poof! Just look at this dust."

"If you had the swell clothes and the chance you'd —"

"Up to my neck. Why not?"

"Oh, nothing." Freddy carefully tightened a nut on the stitcher. "But when you come to think of it, there ain't anything much to that kind of stuff, shows — an' all that. Nothing that lasts, you know, Dell."

"Lasts long enough for me. Lasts one night, and then some."

"Eyah. Then the morning after."

"And then another evening coming after that."

Freddy stood up straight now. "You *do* care for the frow-frow and the shining lights, don't you, kid?" he said steadily. He was very serious, and Della noticing it, flared up seriously, too.

"Care for 'em! Why shouldn't I care for 'em. Why shouldn't I be *hungry* for those shining things? Good land! how can you ask that? Do you know how I've lived all my life? Ever since I can remember, I was workun'. A slave working to get just enough to live on to keep me alive so I could work, and get enough to live on an' no more not a *thing* more. Never had anything — not anything. If I had, if I'd had one teeny taste of these things, it mightn' be so hard. I see other people have things; and I want 'em myself. I want 'em. I tell *yuh*, I want 'em, I want 'em, I want 'em! And, by Gawd! I'm going to get 'em, too." She dropped her eyes the moment her tongue stopped going. Freddy did not move. Only he stood and looked at her, the kindly, big brotherly grin in one corner of his mouth.

"Don't starve yourself any more, kid," said he. "You're going to be fed all the shiny things you can stomach from now on. Go's far's you like, kid; I'm the providing boy. But, say, Dell; there's something better than all that stuff. Yes, there is. What do you think of that game stacked up against a Home — a real Home of your own?"

"I don't think anything about it. I know what's fun."

"Sure." He saw how deeply he had touched her and relented. "But you remember what happened last night?"

“Well?”

“Well?” They eyed each other. Freddy smiled, but Della spoke first.

“Freddy,” said she looking at the clock on the wall, “You’re sure a good scout to me!” And then without a pause, “Gee whiz! One minute to seven, and Joey ain’t here yet. He’s locked out now, poor kid, and he’ll lose half a day.”

“Maybe he isn’t coming at all to-day,” said Freddy. “He was looking pretty tough yesterday.”

“Huh!” said Della. “That ain’t anything new.” Then the power came, the belts creaked, the pulleys groaned, the shafting protested like rheumatic bones. A moment later the machines were clattering insanely; and the day’s work had begun.

Freddy was right. Joey was not coming at all to-day. As we have said, Joey was not all right.

After he left Old Mag he went down in the hall and ate his banana and wondered what was the matter with his head. It felt hot and big. He went out bareheaded and turned his face up toward the cooling drops of rain, but the rain stopped in a few minutes and he was hotter than ever. He slipped up to the corner and drank, drank, drank, at the hydrant in a horse-trough before Sodders’s saloon, and though his stomach swelled with the water he drank it seemed that he never could cool the burning in his throat. He went back and sat on the curb.

He slunk to his bed early and without any supper, and dreamed horribly. He dreamed that he had lost his job, and that the Superintendent pursued him out into

the street, and even home, to the Tenement; and the Superintendent was as black as coal and as big as all the world. Then there was a gleam of light, and he saw Miss Ruth and she reached forward and almost saved him from the big, black pursuer, but something seemed to happen to her, and it was all dark again. In the morning, in answer to his mother's call: "What the devil's matter wit' you? Hah? Why don't you get up? Trying to get late so you can get fired an' loaf around all summer? Hah?" he replied feebly that he was "weak in the knees; be awright in a minute."

He tried to arise and found that his legs would not support him, whereat he fell back and lay unnoticed all day, his mother that day returning Mrs. Rambo's visit. Ruth, discovering the child's condition in the evening, came in to act as nurse, and Mrs. Bruggers wailed:

"That's the way it goes when you has to raise them little kids that ain't worth keepin' when they've been got. Bring 'em up to where they ought 'a be a help to you, and after you wear the best years o' your life taking a care of 'em, first thing you know they're sick on you and you have to give up yer bed to 'em, and feed 'em soup; there's yer thanks. And then a man who can't work only half of half the time!"

"My love!" protested Bruggers. "You know —"

"Shut up! You don't know nahthun. I'm telling you something. Going to get a job now? Hah?"

Mr. Bruggers looked inquiringly toward the bed — Ruth had insisted on Joey's removal to the larger sleeping room — and turned to Ruth.

"Do you think he'll be sick long, Miss Ruth? 'Cause it's hard on us to have him laid up like this now after I've been out of work so long and times so hard as they are. D'you think more than a week? Eh? He ought to be back to work then? What you think?"

"You ought to be back tuh work right now," interrupted Mrs. Bruggers. "You and your little half-day jobs! If I was a man I'd be 'shamed. But what's the use o' talking tuh you? Waste o' wind. S'help me Gawd, I never see anybody in pants that disgraced 'em more than you."

"My love," whispered Bruggers softly, "you wrong me. I—" he picked up the ever conspicuous can and drummed significantly on the bottom with a coin. "I can do it," he said with a wink. "I borrowed from Dolan."

"You sly devil!" said Mrs. Bruggers, greatly mollified. "Hurry up now. Letting me set there suffocating with thirst! That's thanks one gets. You hustle now, you hear?"

When Bruggers came back with the beer he found a state of affairs in the Bruggers's establishment that shocked his sensitive nature to a degree. The woman's noise had led me to the room, and to me as to Ruth, Mrs. Bruggers had proceeded to wail her complaint against Joey's inconsiderate conduct. Unfortunately our points of view differed, and I failed to sympathize. Wherefore Bruggers stepped across his own threshold to find the wife of his bosom loudly appealing for protection from the alleged verbal onslaught of a person who dared to criticize her treatment of her own child.

I suggested to Bruggers that Joey must be better cared for.

"Bruggers! You hear that? In your own house and to your own face! Throw him out; throw him out, if you're a man!"

"Bruggers," said I, "the boy must be moved. I'm going to take him upstairs."

"Who says you are?" demanded the irate mother. "Who the h—l are you to come 'round telling what's to be done with folks' kids? Hah? You get out o' this house and mind your own business. Take care of your own troubles, mister, and we'll take care of our'n. Bruggers, you scut, speak up!"

"I was going to say, my love, stammered Bruggers," "going to say that perhaps Mr. Lord might be willing to do something to make up for — for the boy's lost wages, since he's so smart and ready to snatch kids from their own home."

"Quite right, Bruggers." Inwardly I blessed the man for this simple solution of the difficulty. "I am hiring Joey at — four dollars a week, let us say." I laid a bill on the table. "Two dollars in advance." Mrs. Bruggers snatched the money literally from under her husband's itching fingers. "And you're not to interfere with the boy until he is well."

I believe even Ruth was surprised at me. I know I was surprised at myself. For a crumpled two-dollar bill I had discovered what may be done with two-dollar bills where they are scarce.

Ruth stooped over to lift Joey in her arms, the mystic,

sheltering pose of woman when her soul is stirred to help the weak. But the clothes on the bed and on Joey were too dirty to complete the picture. It wasn't to be endured. I had never done this sort of thing before. I had never thought I might do it. Frankly, it was not pleasant, and I made an awkward job of it, but somehow I managed to get the little fellow up where I could carry him, and we went upstairs and laid him on my bed.

"Take him," we heard Mrs. Bruggers mumble behind us. "You're welcome. Only don't think for a minute you can come into folkses houses and tell 'em to do what you damn please, that's all. Bruggers!"

"My love?"

"Hand me that can."

The doctor came as soon as I could find him, a capable young man who had achieved considerable publicity for his work in the quarter and yet had remained conscientious.

"He'll hardly do," he said at once. "Should have had him weeks, months, years ago. There's nothing left for him to fight with. Probably wasn't anything in the beginning."

"What is it?" I asked.

"Factoryitis aggravating Tenementitis," replied the doctor. "But we will call it typhoid-malaria."

"I see," said I. "And what was it that the Perkins baby died of?"

"Oh, I say now, old man," said the man of medicine, "I wouldn't dig too far into these things, if I were you. Bad for the sleep, you know."

CHAPTER XVI

TRULY, things happen over here. Forty-eight hours after moving into the Tenement, my room was turned into a hospital ward, and my bed occupied by a little mite, such as three days before I had not known existed in the world. In a way, of course, I had known, the same as most of us know. I had read the reports of the board of education, those terrible reports that explain the causes for delinquency and truancy among the school children of the lower West Side. I had heard people talk of Joeys; I had even seen his counterparts. But I had never known one of him; and now here he lay choking for breath before my eyes.

“And yet,” Ruth had said, “there is plenty of food in this world.”

But Joey hadn’t got his share.

“None of them do here,” said Ruth, as we sat discussing this matter, while we watched Joey. “It is the truth, impossible as it may seem. The doctor has told me, and he knows. Most of them actually go hungry through life, under-nourished, with a constant craving that they don’t understand. Then they drink. That helps. It deadens that craving. The more often they drink, the less frequently do they feel uncomfortable. I wonder how it is that they don’t drink more.”

And yet there was plenty of food in the world. Certainly there was. More than plenty, at least in this grand land of ours. Impossible that anybody should starve. They only did that in books — Joey moaned and feebly tossed his arm above his head. Aye; the doctor was right; we should have had him years before.

But in the Tenement now Joey became famous.

Two things there are that are sure to stir the old women of the Tenement — a funeral, or an illness that promises one. Weddings they regard with interested but critical eyes; the groom may or may not be able to earn a living for two; he may not drink up all his wages; there's no judging by looks when a man's dressed up. Births they discuss in expert but unexcited fashion, because babies are the commonest things in the world in Clay Court. But a funeral, or the probability of one, rouses them up to real enthusiasm.

Then they chatter. The smallest detail, the tiniest rumours, become subjects over which to gather on the stairs and with shaking heads discuss in loud, doleful whispers. You can tell by these groups when any one is dying in the Tenement; it is one of our ways of constantly keeping our griefs before our eyes.

Joey, as one of a dozen little working boys in the Tenement, had failed to attract much attention so long as he managed to keep out of bed, save in that he was wonderfully clean-mouthed. Also he had been noted down as extraordinarily puny and skinny, and a few who had troubled to glance twice at him in his pensive

moments had said, "There's something queer about that Bruggers kid; he's got such way-off eyes." Otherwise he was like the other children, something to kick from underfoot when he got in the way.

But now that he was sick and dying, as rumour had it through the Tenement, he at once became an item of interest. It is not too much to say that, in the eyes of the women, Joey's illness outshone for the while the all-absorbing topic of the coming crisis. They said:

"Sick, is he? Oh, well, I've said all the time he wasn't long for this world. But, dear, dear, I must go up and see how he's doing, poor little kid!"

Then they came up the stairs to the fourth floor to proffer offerings of delicacies and advice such as would have killed Joey in a day had all been made use of.

Mrs. Hansen, as a midwife, was the oracle for all gossips, and in her rooms in the basement they gathered to settle the fate of Joey.

"Yess, liddle Yoey iss very seek," said Mrs. Hansen. "Deh doctor, he twist his sh'ulder ven I esk him if he vill gat vell. I know dat doctor; ven he twist his sh'ulder, dere iss purty seek people in det house. Den det boy e'n't gatting no care. No! Dat young woman, Miss Rut', she mebbe olright; I dunno, but she en't had no young vuns of her own, I know dat."

"Ah, he's a weak little mite," sighed one of the circle. "He never was strong."

"Strong! I shu' say he vass strong. You tenk he could live diss long if he en't?"

"They has to be strong if you're going to raise um,"

said another. "It's me that knows. Four I buried and four I kept, and 'twas only the strong ones lived, I'm telling you."

"He'll make a pretty little corpse," ruminated the other woman, "a sweet little corpse. You may think them skinny ones don't, but they always plump up sort of when they're in the coffin. I mind my Danny — you remember, Mrs. Hansen — as little and peekid as he was, but the undertaker says to me, 'He'll be nothing to shame you when they take a last look at him', and he wasn't neither, as you know, Mrs. Hansen. No, poor Mrs. Bruggers needn't worry about his looking a fright, 'cause he won't."

"Will he die, then?" said a young woman.

The others looked at her in surprise, then shook their heads as if the notion of anybody doing anything but dying in this vale of woe and sorrow was preposterous.

"Dey don't last long after dey're down," said Mrs. Hansen. The others sighed agreeably.

"No, no — a few days, perhaps — look how the Perkins baby went. No, no; after they're down it don't take long for them."

"Ugh! I hate to think of funerals." The young woman shrugged her shoulders. "They make you feel so — so like what's-the-use-of-living."

"Huh!" The old women smiled upon her pityingly. She was young; she knew no better; she was not to be condemned.

"What I say," said the one who had recalled her lost Danny, "is that there ain't nothing quite so fine as a

nice funeral with a nice white dress and some flowers to lay you out in. Oh! it's little enough a body gets in this life to let herself be cheated out of *that*. Why, look, my dear, it's the only time in your whole life when you really counts for something. Yes, indeed. It's the only time that you're the whole show and have 'tention paid you altogether because of yourself. Now, look when you get married; there's *him* and other folks that's paid 'tention to. Same when you have kids; there's the baby more important than you. But at a funeral — it's *all* on account of you and your name is in everybody's mouth. No, my dear, a funeral ain't no bad thing to look forward to; not when you've learned to look on the bright side of everything, as you will before you're as old as us."

"I hope Joey gets well," said the young woman, irrationally.

"Ef dey can eat," continued Mrs. Hansen, "den dey mebbe alright." And acting upon this idea that worthy woman concocted a dish of her favourite blood pudding — "klub" she called it — and waddled up to convince Ruth that nothing was so good for a sick child as a meal of blood pudding early and often. Other good women followed her example. Despite the fact that the grocers, as usual, had ceased to give credit because of the threatening trouble, there came a flood of oranges, bananas, cakes, and candy; and Sodders, at the corner, sent up a bottle of port wine with his compliments.

Mr. Bruggers intercepted the wine on the stairs. He knew it wasn't good for Joey.

And Joey was very sick. The doctor came and went,

and so did Ruth. I stayed pretty much in the room. I had turned nurse suddenly and clumsily, upon seeing that Ruth would wear herself out if permitted. And Joey lay in the damp, warm fever-fog and knew nothing of it. He lay like dead, breathing merely enough to keep the life in him, while the fever marshalled its forces for the grim onslaught of the crisis. At times he moaned. At times the curtain at the window flopped listlessly. There was something similar in the two sounds. The suggestion of helplessness was in both.

It was this, Joey's too obvious helplessness against the odds against him, that crumpled Della that Monday evening, and sent her sobbing out into the hall.

"It ain't fair, it ain't fair!" she whispered to Ruth. "The poor little kid! He never done any dirt in his life. He'll croak, and he don't deserve it at all. It's a shame."

Della refused to accompany Freddy to Electric Park that night, though the temptation hung red before her eyes. He went to familiarize himself with his future audience. She thought of Binger, and of his golden teeth and his diamond ring, Doussang's, where he had taken them, and of the temptation that then had whispered in her innermost heart. But she had looked upon Joey recently.

"It wouldn't be right with Joey so sick," she explained.

"We ain't going to hurt Joey, are we?" demanded Freddy.

"I wouldn't feel right doing it," said Della, but she failed to explain why. Freddy marvelled at the new look in her eyes as she spoke, marvelled and was happy

without knowing why. It was the mother heart in Della swelling for the moment.

She wished she could do something for Joey. But Ruth had told her that nothing could be done just then. She wished she could do something for somebody. So many people needed it. She thought of what a hard world it was for some people, of how lucky she was, after all, though she often had considered her lot well-nigh unbearable. She wandered aimlessly down to the corner. Rinehart was up on his box before Sodders's, more virulent than ever, and Della felt inclined to cry out: "Shame on you! There's a sick kid next door." But instead she moved on and gave a nickel to the blind man at the corner.

CHAPTER XVII

AND Rinehart was “organizing.”

AND Rinehart was “organizing.” I am afraid that I missed much of his activities during the next few sweltering days. He was, in a way, the centre of the amazing storm that was brewing; but the old habits of what Dicky called “cold, mathematical observation” had deserted me, and Joey, the small, was the absorbing factor. The progress of the Little Surprise Party, the possibility of the wage-cut, and the crisis that was coming out of them seemed only of minor importance compared with the problem of Joey’s physical welfare. Joey was the hope of the Tenement. So long as it could breed children like him there was hope — if they lived. If they didn’t — there were Mrs. and Mr. Bruggers, and the can.

But in spite of my negligence it was impossible to live in Clay Court these days and not hear and see much of Rinehart. The man seemed to have no occupation save that of “organizing.” Where his means of livelihood came from was a mystery. When he slept or ate likewise was a mystery. He might be seen at six o’clock in the morning talking to a tired night worker coming home, and I know that he was talking in the crowd that was turned out of Sodders’s saloon every morning at one.

“Organize, organize — everybody,” was his one slogan.

He went through the tenement by day and preached it to the out-of-works, always a goodly number here; by night he held forth to large, secret meetings that everybody but the police knew about.

"They're teasing you, they're holding off," he said as the days went by and no wage-cut came. "But" — in a voice of doom — "it's coming, it's coming, and we gotta be ready for it when it comes."

The basement-born Little Surprise Party was growing. They had taken the Hall over Sodders's saloon. The basement had become too small.

The Hall in reality was only a loft on the top floor of the three-story building, where Sodders had knocked out the partitions and made the floor all one room. A sign on the door read:

HALL. WEDDINGS, \$3; POLISH \$5.

A single set of stairs ran up from the floor below and there was a door at the rear. Outside of these there was no entrance or exit, and the windows were smudged over with a thick coat of lamp-black. Four gas jets struggled listlessly against the darkness, and the air was the air of a cave, flat and dead.

In this place the Little Surprise Party had its headquarters, and from the little platform built against the rear wall near the door, Rinehart exhorted his followers to organize, organize, organize.

"Organization means salvation," he explained. "Organization — everybody!"

Then followed a demonstration of the good old wreck-

ing-crew system of organizing, a strenuous process whereby many a man was organized in spite of his strongest efforts to the contrary. The system is simple, simple and effective; and its demonstration was a delight to the party's ruder members. A man who valued his whole bones and natural features had two courses open to him — leave Clay Court or become a Brother. And moving cost money. So the Brotherhood grew. Yet it was all done so quietly, systematically, so skilfully that the police stool-pigeon — a crippled tobacconist a block away on the Avenue — knew not a thing about it. A man was "approached" in his home one evening. The next found him slipping up the stairs to the Hall and mingling with the crows as if he merely had been notified to attend lodge.

There were sick faces among these newcomers, faces that told of an action sorely against the individual will and desire; eyes that looked reproachfully around as if striving to locate the Force that had dragged them into the movement; mouths that dropped at the corners, as the mouths of men who are much afraid. Yet once attention was directed to these men they became the loudest and firmest of all, fearful lest the ban of suspicion should fall upon their earnestness.

However, these half-hearted ones were greatly in the minority. The majority obviously were with Rinehart, or, at least, were under his spell. He led them, and they followed, yelping at his heels. No vociferation, no matter how grisly, leaped from his lips but it had repetition or duplication from some mouths in the crowd. No hint,

no matter how insane, did he drop, but some one was ready to act upon it at once. Rinehart was but a prompter; the others knew their lines and spoke them after the cue was given.

There were meetings in the Hall nightly. One was much like another. Sometimes a wordy individual rose and crossed arguments with Rinehart. Rinehart had one set answer for such, an answer which evoked deep belly growls of approval from the crowd and labelled the upstart definitely:

“You’re a white-livered coward. You’re afraid.”

All except Perkins. Perkins was drinking steadily since they had buried the baby, and he drank silently and alone—a bad sign. They took the baby away in a hack, after the manner of the Court, and the little white casket rode out the long ride on the knees of the grim, bereaved father. His long, hairy hands hung over and gripped the edges in a fierce, primitive sort of fashion. He yielded up his burden to the undertaker with a scowl on his face. When the dirt fell he put his arm around his wife and turned away without a word or a tear. So did Tom Perkins give back to earth his last born.

When he came to the meetings he shouldered his way insolently to a corner, and leaning against the wall folded his arms and glowered at the speaker, no matter who, through his bushy brows. A silence always followed his coming; then the buzz broke out again. Sometimes Perkins broke the silence. He would laugh in Rinehart’s face, spit on the floor and go out with a sneer on his lips.

They had a sentinel at the stairway, for the meetings were very secret. He always stepped far to one side when Perkins came.

But in action, Rinehart was the leader of the Little Surprise Party. He was the voice that spoke the thoughts of the crowd. At times they roared their approval so loudly that the windows rattled and the noise flew over the Court to the Tenement like the hum of an angry storm. An old woman, leaning out of her window said, "It's a fine kettle of grief they're cooking up over the way."

"And it's us will eat it," said her neighbour, with a babe at the breast.

"It always is us. But the Company started the fire and put the kettle on. Our boys are only throwing in the bone."

"It'll be bitter just the same," said the one with the child.

Night after night the Party crawled up the stairway above Sodders's; night after night Rinehart twisted the stick in the raw sore. The meetings and what they portended became the life of the Court after the day's work was done. Often they lasted far along toward morning.

The Presidential election was a side issue. The Surprise had overshadowed everything. Even the sporting extras went unread. One subject monopolized all attention.

The children played a new game in the street; one was forced to be "Company," and the rest pelted him with anything they could lay hands on.

Verily, those were hectic days in Clay Court!

At times, when Joey slept, we leaned from the window and listened to Rinehart at the corner.

"They like it," said Ruth sadly. "They can believe that. But not what I told them."

"You cannot help that."

"No, no, not by talking here. This isn't the place to begin. There is too much noise here, and the little dark rooms are too dark. They blind the people who live in them. They cannot see, they cannot hear. They are too heavily loaded. They can't look up — no, I see it now. This isn't the place to begin."

"Where then?"

"At the other end. At the top. With the people who must lift the load; who aren't loaded themselves. They can do it. These can't. Then these will hear and see."

"But what —?"

"We must tell them, the other people, our people, about the load."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE Bruggers — oh! the Bruggers were living in clover these days, all on account of Joey. It is one thing to have a son fall sick on you when you lose his wages, but quite another when Providence places him in the hands of one who would rather hand over good two-dollar bills than listen to a parent's bibulous lamentations. I am afraid I proved a gold mine to Mrs. Bruggers. She was a diligent miner. Her best manœuvre was to come tramping up into the hallway outside of Joey's room and shatter the quiet with her large, insistent voice.

"I will see him, I tell you; I will see him. Ain't he my own flesh and blood? Ain't I got right to see my own flesh and blood? Lemme see 'im, I tell you, lemme see 'im!"

This she would bellow loud enough to disturb the entire top floor, knowing that absolute quiet had been prescribed for Joey. The next step would be to halt her and explain that the racket would hurt the boy. Furthermore, she was being paid to leave him alone.

"The money's all gone," shrieks Mrs. Bruggers.

"Here! For heaven's sake, take this and shut up."

Another transfer of a bank-note to Mrs. Bruggers, and she, carefully hiding the money, would blubber:

"I'm a reas'nable woman, Mr. Lord. Show me anybody says I ain't reas'nable. Anybody does the right thing by me I don't bother 'em. But they has got to be right."

Then downstairs to where Mr. Bruggers sat waiting, and —

"Bruggers! Wash out the can. Quick."

Mr. Bruggers, too, in some mysterious fashion seemed to have secured funds, and the result was all that the precious pair ever had dreamed of. They were happy from waking time to sleeping time, happy and unperturbed by the storm that brewed around them. So ideal was their condition, from their own peculiar point of view, that Mrs. Bruggers would have been hard put to find anything for which Mr. Bruggers might be given his daily scoldings had it not been that Bruggers during the last few days had become one of the most ardent of the little Surprise Party's supporters. Never an opportunity now went by but that he lifted up his voice and chanted its principles, strictly à la Rinehart. Had Mrs. Bruggers paused to indulge in a little exercise in the useful faculty of thought she might have established the rather obvious connection between Mr. Bruggers's mysterious funds and his sudden enthusiasm for Rinehart.

But Mrs. Bruggers was seeing the world through rosy, though foamy, glasses in these days, and such a vision is not conducive to the critical mood. She assailed Bruggers mightily whenever he opened *his* mouth, but that was merely force of habit, for Mrs. Bruggers, during these days was constantly in a condition in which she loved

the whole world and generously invited her friends up into the kitchen of the third floor rear to share her over-flowing cup of bottled cheer.

Over in the Hall a terrible problem was being dealt with in terrible fashion; but Mrs. Bruggers and her little coterie sat in the kitchen and demonstrated the lightness and ease of life when one regards it through glasses rosy and foamy, and Friday evening, it happened, was one of the rosiest of these foamy events. The company was made up of Mrs. Rambo, widow, Mr. Dolan, widower; Mrs. Hansen, midwife, and a couple of others from the Tenement. Mr. Bruggers poured with great success, Mrs. Bruggers talked, and a pleasant time was being had by all.

"The trouble with most folks," said Mrs. Bruggers apropos of the great topic of the day, which Bruggers had brought up, "is that they're too particular about what luck brings them. Ain't satisfied with what they get. Take it as it comes, make the best of everything; that's what I say. You'll find you ain't so worst off after all. Now, what would most folks have done and how would they have took on if they'd been Joey's ma when he gets sick? What do I do? 'Make the best of it,' sez I; and Joey's been paying four times his reg'lar wages ever since. Yes, my dears, there ain't no cloud so black but what it's got a silver lining somewhere about it."

And Mrs. Bruggers jingled a pocketful of change to reassure herself that it was coined silver at that.

"That's sense," said Mr. Dolan in his well-known bull-frog tone and manner. "That's sense. Folks what is too partic'lar soon finds where they gets off at."

"I dunno who you mean," said Mrs. Rambo, looking far away.

"I ain't saying I mean anybody," rumbled Mr. Dolan. "But when you chases your legs off to get somebody a job in a rest'runt, and then they won't take it because the hours is too long, and the wages ain't high enough, and the boss is a Greek, it's time to begin to guess at what some folks expects."

"I never could stand for Greeks," said Mrs. Rambo, tossing her frizzled head. "Mrs. Hansen, could you ever stand for Greeks?"

"I donna en'ting 'bout dem," said the good-natured midwife. "I don' have en'ting to do wid dem. Dere en't no Greek vimmen in dis contry."

"I know a case," slowly continued Mr. Dolan, as if there had been no interruption, "know a case where a widow woman got a free Christmas basket, and she wasn't satisfied. There was pork, 'n' beef, 'n' soup meat, 'n' chicken, 'n' tea, 'n' coffee, 'n' flour, 'n' sugar, 'n' beans, 'n' p'tatoes, 'n' sausage, 'n' cel'ry, 'n' raisins, 'n' — an' a duck, an' a order for two bucks on the coal man; an' she strips the paper off of it, and pulls out the pork, 'n' beef, 'n' soup meat, 'n' chicken, 'n' tea, 'n' coffee, 'n' flour, 'n' sugar, 'n' beans, 'n' p'tatoes, 'n' sausage, 'n' cel'ry, 'n' raisins, 'n' the duck, and the order on the coal man, and fires 'em on the table and sez, 'What! No pickled pig's feet?'"

Mr. Dolan croaked suggestively, and upon being supplied with what his being craved, continued:

"And then to show you how it goes with such folks,

down she goes to the coal man an' trades in the order — eight bits for coal 'n' wood, an' eight bits for a half ticket in the Honduras Lottery what the coal man was selling, an' when the drawing was out her number wins next to capital prize, an' what has she done? Gone an' traded the ticket off for a mess of them damn pigs' feet!"

Most of the group nodded sagely at this horrible example.

"I don't like pickled pigs' feet," sniffed Mrs. Rambo. "I never did."

"Pickles pig feet is good ven dey are pickle right," said Mrs. Hansen.

"The thing is," said Mrs. Bruggers, "they're better'n nothing when you're real hungry."

"I ain't hungry," said Mr. Dolan. "I'm thirsty."

"The question," suggested Mr. Bruggers, delicately, "ain't pigs' feet, but is our friends ready for another little nip. Eh, my love?"

"Always ready," croaked Dolan, "always ready."

"Oh, I couldn't down another drop," protested Mrs. Rambo, delicate lady that she was.

"She can drink me blind," said Mr. Dolan.

"Mr. Dolan!" protested the lady.

"What I say," said Mrs. Bruggers, taking a bottle of beer from under the running tap, "what I say is, you never know what you can do until you've tried — oh-h!"

The bottle dropped from her fingers, her hands went up to her face, and she started back as if she had seen a ghost.

"My Gawd!" she whispered with a great labouring of breath. "What was that?"

"What?" they asked, following her gaze toward the hall.

"Didn't you hear it?"

Her uncanny alarm and the tone of her voice had sobered them.

"Hear what?" said Dolan, faintly, after awhile. "There wasn't nothing."

"Oh!" screamed Mrs. Bruggers, trembling. "There it goes again. It's Joey," she whispered. "It's Joey — Yes; I'm your ma, Joey. I'm coming, I'm coming, Joey!"

And going as if she had been drawn by strong hands, Mrs. Bruggers ran clamouring out into the hall and up the stairs to the room where Joey lay sick unto death.

"Now what d'you suppose got into the old lady?" queried Mr. Bruggers, as he recovered the dropped bottle. "I, for one, know there wasn't anything to hear, and she never had the snakes before."

CHAPTER XIX

THE crisis had come for Joey.

TAs the doctor had said, the fever had been in him for a week before his collapse, so there was little left for Joey to fight with, but after the fight had begun in earnest he surprised us all by the tenacity with which he battled.

“Not stamina enough to fit out an able-bodied cat,” said the doctor, “and still he’s holding his own. It’s a queer world, my masters, and the queerest thing in it is the way some people refuse to die.”

This was the situation with Joey. Cheated out of all things that make life worth living, he refused to be cheated out of life itself. The clean little soul, although born into a plant rotten with the seed of two generations of poverty, struggled its way up from the back pit of fever and gasped for existence in a way that would not be denied.

“My child,” one might have called Joey, but the term would have been wrong. He was no child. He never had been a child; he never could be. Childhood is one of the things that such as he do not know, one of the things that fate takes out of their world when it places them where they are. Their lives are under the law of fang and claw from their toddling days. They know no years of tenderness, they have no protected period to

guarantee their growth to maturity. The wonder is that they live; the bitter question they often ask themselves is "Why were we born?" But here Joey lay on my bed, a little streak of skin and bone with a big head, and fought against the devils of fever as if every one of his living hours had been a time of joy and happiness.

"It is a queer world, my masters." The doctor was a cynic, but sometimes he spoke the truth.

As the fever rose and ebbed and rose again, the boy rambled aloud in the strange worlds of darkness and unconsciousness; and there was a world of revelation in his queerly mumbled words. Sometimes he was at his work in these wanderings. Again, he was in the Tenement. Two horrors rode him and drove him to the brink of desperation — the fear of the Superintendent, and the idea that he had lost his job and was bringing the sad news home.

"Oh, how could I help it?" He was in the kitchen of the third floor rear then, facing his father and mother.

"The Supe had it in for me. He did, I tell you. I didn't loaf. There — there, he's after me now. Stop him — stop him —"

The wet, quivering little body would start up in a paroxysm of indescribable terror, and subside as Ruth's arm went around him and her voice calmed him with words of reassurance.

He debated with himself, at times, what his parents' course would be when they found that he was not working.

"They'll send you on the kip, of course," he muttered.

“What d’you expect? You’ll have to go on the kip until you get another job.”

The horrors of homelessness in the streets ran before his eyes and he burst out into awful sobs. Then the Superintendent was after him again.

“I didn’t quit before Six, honest, I didn’t. I’ll work faster, yessir.”

So it went, day after day, and night after night, while Ruth and I alternated in playing nurse, though Ruth was in the room most of the time. He listened only to her voice. Others spoke to him and he shuddered as if they hurt him.

“He has a chance,” said the doctor. “Who would have thought it?”

When the crisis came this hot, sulphurous Friday night, not a breath of wind was stirring and the air in the sick room was enough to make one pant. Ruth, the doctor, and I sat and waited for the outcome of the crucial minutes, and Joey babbled and tossed aimlessly.

“It’s coming now,” said the doctor, as the boy grew quiet. “Here’s the test.”

A tiny fuzz of perspiration broke out on the white, tight forehead. Suddenly, and with no prelude, Joey broke out:

“Mother, mother!”

The cry, although it was a cry, was so faint that it could scarcely have been heard farther than a whisper. The idea that it could have reached down to the third floor rear seems preposterous, yet at that very instant occurred the disconcerting rupture of Mrs. Bruggers’s

rosy little party which we already have noted. Perhaps Mrs. Bruggers did hear something; perhaps not. At all event there came heavy, unsteady steps on the stairs, a steam-like puffing, a knock, and Mrs. Bruggers, redder, more puffed, more "happy," than ever, stood in the doorway with the tears glistening upon her fat, red cheeks.

"She's jagged, you fool," said Joey to himself. "Don't think she cares to see you. Stop your yelling."

Mrs. Bruggers looked at the doctor, at Ruth, at me, seeking to read in our faces the news she feared to hear.

"Is he — is he worse?" She begged. Something in the fat, red face drove Ruth to her feet.

"My Joey!" sobbed the woman in the doorway. "My poor little Joey!"

Ruth sprang to her side and placed an arm around the shaking shoulders. Then Mrs. Bruggers broke down.

"Tell me — tell me honest — if he's going to — " her lips faltered at the dread word and she frankly sobbed out her fear on Ruth's shoulder.

"We still hope he isn't," whispered Ruth. "There is hope."

"My little Joey! The only one I ever had that lived. If he goes what'll I do, what'll I do?"

Ruth spoke consolingly.

"Perhaps I ain't been a good mother, Miss Ruth, perhaps I ain't. But Lord knows I had my troubles, miss — an' I been careless. But I can't stand to lose him. You'll save him for me if you can, won't you? I — I'm gone if you don't. He — he's kep' me out o'

the gutter, Joey has. Nothing else — His blessid little eyes! *Joey!*"

The child had risen to his knees and was staring at her in sheer surprise.

"*Joey!*" She stumbled toward the bed and held forth her arms to him in supplication, as if begging his forgiveness. "*Joey!* Don't *yuh* know me? Don't you know me, *Joey*? Ah, *Joey*, *Joey*, don't look at me that way? Don't you know *yer ma*?"

The little fingers fumbled at the covers and the weary brows puckered as if the mind likewise was fumbling with a problem. The lips opened and parted, and the quickening breath was all that passed through them.

"*Joey!* For *Gawd's* sake, don't, *Joey!* Don't look at me so."

"*God!*" said *Joey* in awe-stricken whisper. "*Do you* know 'bout *Him*, too?"

"*Oh, Joey, Joey!* Look's if you knew me; *yer ma*, *Joey*. Don't you remember me?"

"Tell *pa*," whispered *Joey*. "Tell 'em all — if you know 'bout *Him*."

"He's going — he's dying!" screamed the woman and hid her face in the bed.

"Tell 'em all!" cried *Joey*, trying to rise to his feet. "Tell 'em" — He paused and turned sanely upon *Ruth*, a new light in his eyes, a new peace settling upon his face. "Miss *Ruth*," he cried joyously, "Tell *Old Mag* — tell her I could make the pitcher now!"

He sank slowly back upon her arm.

"Lie down, *Joey*."

“Heh?”

“Lie down.”

He snuggled weakly against the pillow upon which she laid him, his face to the wall.

“Yes; I’m tired,” he murmured contentedly. “I’ll lay down.”

The woman, with her face on the bed, sobbed loudly; doors opened and slammed about; speech sounded in the halls; footsteps on the stairs, on the walk outside. But in the midst of the medley we were able to hear one sound that made our hearts leap with thanksgiving. Joey was breathing softly and evenly, the little chest rising and falling regularly, as a child breathes when he is tired and regaining life in blessed restful slumber.

“He came through in great shape,” said the doctor, later. “The crisis is over. Now, if he’s got any stamina and doesn’t have a relapse, the poor little devil will live.”

It grew quiet in the Tenement and in the sick room. The lights went out; rooms and halls grew dark and quiet. The talking and laughter and quarrelling ceased. A slamming door became an event; likewise a foot on the stairs. In the sick room only the steady breathing of the child was heard, while at his side Ruth kept silent vigil. A fly buzzed droningly around the light, dashing in and out of the darkness, its noise and motion monumental in the absolute quietude.

The time passed, and Joey, struggling back toward life, returned temporarily to the world of the conscious.

“Miss Ruth.” His whisper was as distraught as that

of a child hiding from punishment. "Do you think I'm going to die?"

"No, Joey."

"I don' know. I feel funny. Little while ago I was way out — way out somewhere — way out. It was awful dark there. An' I was all alone, an' I was going some place way out in the dark, where I couldn't see — all alone — like jumping off some place by myself." He reached up and found her hand.

"Oh, I don' wanto die and go out there all alone in the dark. It's too tough. I'm scared! Don' — don' let me go, Miss Ruth. Please, please. I wanto stay. Oh, I wanto stay, so bad, Miss Ruth!"

"You will, Joey; you will stay now."

Her voice seemed to calm him, and he lay blinking up at her.

"What was the dark, Miss Ruth? That where people go when they die? No; no, it couldn't be that, 'cause I was all alone, and they's lots died before me. Where did they all go, Miss Ruth? They didn't send me away off there myself, did they?"

"Go to sleep, Joey; please go to sleep, and I'll tell you all about it when you awaken."

"Yes'm," said Joey, curling up obediently. "Yes'm."

It was bright, sunny Saturday afternoon when Joey awoke. A breeze was coming in at the window, and Ruth was sitting at his side.

"Am I going to get well?" he asked at once.

"Yes; surely."

“Wonder if they’ll gimme my job back?”

He lay staring up at her and while Ruth was framing a satisfactory reply some one cried out excitedly in the Court.

“What’s that racket about?” demanded Joey.

Ruth stepped to the window. A single voice made itself heard above the new tumult.

“The cut’s a cinch, now!” it cried. “There’s a piece that says so in the paper.”

“Gee!” said Joey. “Now I’ll have to hunt another job anyhow.”

CHAPTER XX

IT MUST be a mistake. Of course it is a mistake. They won't do it. They cannot."

Ruth leaned out of the window, listening to the boy below shouting his papers.

"It is a mistake," she repeated. "A mere, mistaken guess. It never will be so."

Of course not! The idea was preposterous. I knew that, now that I knew a little of Clay Court. Anybody would have known it who had lived there for a little while. Men — cultured, intelligent men, of the sort who directed the business affairs of the Consolidated Factory—didn't do such things in this enlightened days. They couldn't.

"Of course it is a mistake," said I. "The boys are only trying to sell papers."

To reassure myself I hurried down to the corner news-stand and bought a paper. The boy had shouted the news as the paper gave it, but the sheet was one of those that substitute big wood type and red ink for intelligence and veracity. The heads for our item covered nearly a square foot; the story itself took up a square inch or two. Short as it was, however, it told the dreaded news in a manner that carried conviction. It ran as follows :

FACTORY BARONS TO VOTE WAGE-CUT

CONSOLIDATED FACTORY ANNOUNCES BIG
SLICE OFF WORKERS' PAY

It is rumoured in certain quarters of financial circles that well-known authorities are said to have predicted that the much discussed wage-cut, said to have been long contemplated by the directors of the Consolidated Factory Company, is to be made. It is expected that at the special meeting of directors to be held at three this afternoon a vote on this matter will be taken. Those who know predict that the vote will be in favour of a decrease in the wages of the thousands of workers employed in the great Consolidated plants.

I smiled reminiscently. Good, old "rumoured" and "said to be!" When news merely was rumoured or said to be in this sheet it never happened at all in the real newspapers.

But this was an exception. Another sheet, a dependable one, came to hand. The item was not displayed prominently here, but its message, authoritatively stated, was the same; the news had leaked out that the directors would vote the cut in wages.

"But, oh! they can't, they can't, if they know," cried Ruth. "You know they cannot."

No, of course, they couldn't. It was too raw. They couldn't, if they knew. The trouble was that they didn't know.

"You'll have to tell them," I said to Ruth. "It's the only thing to do."

Followed a rush over into the city. At two-thirty I found Dicky Clews breakfasting at the club. He was a hearty soul, Dicky.

“Hello, old man. What’s hurry about? Say, come fishing with us, will you? The bunch leaves for the Temagami country this eve. Bill Jenney’s private car. You know what Bill is. Grand trip. We’re—Hello! Something wrong?”

“Many things, Dicky. Are you going to attend the meeting of Consolidated Factory directors at three this afternoon?”

“So I am, so I am,” muttered Dicky. “Nearly forgot. Good thing you spoke. But — why the falling-market face, old man?”

“Then,” said I, “if you have influence, which you have, and if I have your friendship, which I want, in the name of all you hope for, arrange to let Miss Ruth Arthur speak to the assembled board for a few minutes before the meeting is called. She has something to tell you that you all need to hear. Go on, now, Dicky. Do this if you never do anything again.”

It was next to impossible to surprise Dicky.

“Miss Arthur — speak — board? Certainly, old man. Anything, anything to take that look off your face.”

The Directors’ Room of the Consolidated Factory Company was done in dark mahogany after a fashion that made even tiresome meetings a pleasure. It was in a down-town building many miles away from the Factory. From the windows one had a view of a park across the street, and in the distance the lake, fine, blue, open and free, sprinkled with white-sailed yachts and black funneled steamers, rested the eyes with a pleasant

suggestion of the limitless beauties of the grand old world that it is, to be sure.

There was an almost cathedral atmosphere to the room. It was opened only on the occasion of a Directors' meeting, and so secluded and sequestered was it, so carefully guarded against the intrusion of noise or disturbance, that the powerful, brilliant crew that gathered here on these occasions might well have been a canonical assemblage, Bishops of the New Religion, come together for the purpose of devising new intricacies for the worship of the munificent god Success. Sound the hymn softly, swing the censers slowly. The doors swing open. The procession files in. The doors are closed. The Grand Mogul chairman takes his seat, and the service is on.

And what a service! What worshippers! Worshippers such as the world never saw before. Great men, grand men, but for the time being helpless slaves in their unquestioning allegiance to the power and righteousness of their god. Stand back with bared head! The gavel falls, the meeting comes to order. Twenty of the most powerful men in the country are going to search their brains, their hearts, and their very souls for ways and means to further the profitable spread of the only religion their world will let them know. Twenty men, representing twenty fortunes, all swearing to one symbol: the Dollar. Twenty brains, the finest products of evolution, and not one of them near enough to the meaning of life to have one thought of more importance than the creation of more wealth by the already impossibly large fortunes that they control!

What! A thought of more importance? Cast out the heretic! Close and lock the sacred doors! Cast all such blasphemers out of the sacred precincts of this chamber, out in the darkness where he may ponder over the solemn spectacle going on within, and curse, or laugh, according to how the gods have gifted him with a sense of humour!

Odd, very odd, that in such a place should be settled how much Clay Court might eat for breakfast!

On the afternoon of this same Saturday when Joey came back to the land of the living, Dicky Clews rose from his seat of honour before the chairman with a paper in his hand, and begged for a moment of informal speech to the Board of Directors of the Consolidated Factory Company.

“I have a personal request to make,” said he. “It’s a rotten nuisance. Mr. Lord, you know, John Lord, has mesmerized me into doing it. There is a young woman — Miss Ruth Arthur. Some of you know her. You all know her gov’nor. She’s one of us, you know, one of our kind. She’s all right. She — she wants to talk to us for a few minutes this afternoon about — I don’t know what about. Awful nuisance, as I say. She does something at a settlement house, or something in that line, you know. I didn’t want to get let in for this, but hang it! I couldn’t help it. Lord insisted on it; said it would be the best investment we’d ever made of our valuable time. All that sort of thing.

“If she wasn’t one of our kind — impossible, of course. As she is — daughter of old Doctor Arthur, you know —

very safe and sane — and only a few minutes — I'm afraid I'll have to insist, you know, that we give her those few minutes right now before we get down to business. Thanks, all of you."

It was one of the few decent things Dicky Clews had done since he was a thin, straight school-boy, unpowerful and unspoiled. Perhaps he thought of that same clean boyhood then; perhaps it was only his good nature that had driven him to the mark. But the effect was the same, for the name of the Clews' dollars was great in the directorate, and after a perfunctory motion and vote Ruth slipped through the quietly opened door, the door closed behind her, and she stood facing the conclave, a little strip of a woman, mostly white face and living eyes.

"Miss Arthur, this is a pleasure, indeed." The courtly white-haired chairman arose and bowed earnestly. "May I offer you the chair?"

"You are kind, very kind. I will not trouble you." She remained standing near the door. Her eyes ran over each face before her. She was looking for something in each face, but it wasn't there. And Dicky Clews saw that she was disappointed, and he was wondering why when she began to speak; and the fervour in her low tones drove the idle conjecture out of his head and riveted his attention along with that of every man in the room.

"Dear brothers," said Ruth, "you are very kind to listen to me, and I won't take up much of your time. I want to tell you about Clay Court. It's a place that

you ought to know about; you control it body and soul."

Then she told them something about Clay Court, about how its people worked in the Factory, and something about how they lived.

"You have heard of these things before. Stories have been printed in the papers, and speakers have quoted figures to you. But you never have known — never have known what it all meant. You never have *known* that it is so, that such things exist over there across the river. I say you never have *known*, brothers, or there would have been an end to it all long ago. You would have put an end to it, for the sake of your own blessed peace of mind. And now, not knowing what it means, you are responsible for it all. You are the thieving, murdering creators of that hopeless little inferno over on the West Side."

Her low, tender voice lost none of its tenderness in making her startling accusation; her wistful, pleading face was no less sweet to look upon. More than one self-controlled director sat up with a start. It was, at least, a novelty to be called a thieving murderer by such a gracious little lady.

"Dear brothers," continued Ruth warmly, after her words had sunk home, "I do not come here to be vindictive, to cause one hurt, or to make one enemy. We are all of one great family, all sisters and brothers; I love you all; I want to try to teach you to love, if you can, my people; and if you cannot love them learn to be fair to them. I do not say what I say idly. I

have thought long over it. I have searched with my own hands, seen with my own eyes, and weighed it all long and carefully before I came here to speak to you. And I repeat it: You are the ones who are responsible for such places as Clay Court, because Clay Court is what it is because of miserable wages, and you are the men who pay the wages; you are the men who say to Clay Court: 'You may not feed your children enough to make them grow up strong men and women, you may not have fresh air enough to keep your infants alive. You may have only enough to live like swine,' say you, 'because we, your masters, desire to become very, very rich.'

"That is what you say to Clay Court through wages, my brothers, and that is why I come here straight from the place, with the sobs of weary mothers, and the wails of hungry babes in my ears, and the sight of ill and wasted boys and girls before my eyes, to tell you about it, to drive home to you the fact that such places exist, and to beg of you in the name of God and all goodness: Do not add any more to the crimes you bear by making this new contemplated wage-cut. For now you know, and the excuse of Cain no longer will suffice.

"I know you do not mean to be cruel to my people. You haven't meant to treat them unjustly. You merely have been careless and ignorant. You have said: 'I can do this, therefore, I will. It is more important that I grow rich than that a thousand people are paid living wages. Dividends count more than souls. I and my kind are the world; the rest merely are the mud'

bricks upon which the world stands. Beside, they're used to this sort of thing, and their misery has nothing to do with me.'

"And saying this you build, in your ignorance, a mire from which arises the bill which you pay each year for your police, your asylums, your hospitals, your jails, and your orphanages.

"Their misery is nothing to us,' you say, and you take, because you can. You take so much, brothers. You take so much that there is not enough left for the others. You take more than your share, more than you need, more than you have any good of.

"For what does it avail you after all, that you can take so much to have and hold for your own? What does it do for you? Does it make you happy? We all need to work and do something and struggle because we feel that the end of it all will be happiness. But does your striving and taking, which yields you such an enormous number of dollar figures and power, make you happy?"

Her eyes moved quietly over the faces before her; each one she subjected to searching scrutiny. And each man as she looked at him knew in his soul that she had read the tale of strife, turmoil, worry, trouble that rode in his heart and made his days a succession of distressed hours.

"No," she said, "you are not happy. You are rich, you are powerful, you have the sensation of being mighty; but, no, you are not happy. That is the wonderful thing of it to me," she said musingly, "that you will struggle to take so much and to make so much misery

for others, when it really does nothing to create happiness for yourselves."

(“I swear the girl’s actually pitying us!” thought Dicky Clews as he met her eyes.)

“It — every thousand you take — adds only to your struggles, an additional burden to carry during your brief stay on mother earth.

“How long,” she said abruptly, “do you expect to stay on earth? And during eternity, whether you believe in a hereafter or not, you know that your wealth cannot go with you. You —” she singled out the old chairman — “how much longer do you think you will pursue your senseless course of adding to your already superfluous riches? Ten years? Then what? Death. And after death what will you leave behind you? Money enough to keep your family in the fore-front of the rich? Money enough to let your boy go through life without one moment’s need to be useful? To let him grow up without a thought in his head beyond his own pleasure, to keep him in the dark concerning the realness of life, as much as you keep your factory children there through unfair conditions? Or to let your daughter grow up the female counterpart of such a son? Is this what you mean to leave behind; is this all?

“Dear brother, it is not all. Heed now; behind you, you will leave that which will have had a far greater significance, something that will testify more loudly to your power. You will leave behind you the stamp of your master hand in the form of scores, hundreds, aye, thousands of your brothers, sisters, stunted, mutilated,

crippled, destroyed body and soul through your great system; you will leave your mark in scores of consumptives, made in your workshops, contributing their taint to hundreds of offspring; you will leave your mark in an army of men and women grown to maturity, living and dying in ignorance of one single thing that makes life good and beautiful and worth while, because of your system; in rickety, anæmic children growing up and bearing rickety, anæmic offspring of their own; in dozens of criminals, and scores of girls forced to the street; in a creation of another brick in the miserable structure that is called a slum, another addition to the tribe of miserables who in the end may reach their tainted hands up, and up, even unto your class and tear it down to its own miry level.

“This, brother, is what you will leave behind to show that you, in the natural order of things, sojourned on this earth for your natural term of years, blindly took for yourself all the wealth that you could reach and passed away into eternity. Beside this, your money and fame will be as a tiny cottage beside a great prison. Long after that money is gone, long after your house has fallen, the effects of these things will be on the world. Idiots will go to asylums, paralytics sit helpless in the chairs; and the malformed of soul will demand the treatment society has laid out for them, the whole vast weeping total of human misery will have been added to by your little contribution. That is what you will leave behind you, and all the schools and hospitals you may build will not atone to the race for these things. Oh, man, made

in the image of God, how long will it be before you begin to see!

“How can you accuse us of these things?” you demand. “How do we do them?”

“How? By actions like this wage-cut that is being talked of. That is how it happens. I do not think you mean to be cruel. No, you are too good for that.

“You do good; oh, you do so much good! You build schools, and hospitals, and play-grounds, and for every one of these that you give, a song of praise and thanks goes up to high heaven. You are good men. You are not bad. But, oh, you are so ignorant, so savagely cruel! That is what it is, the cruelty of the savage — of thoughtlessness and ignorance.

“This cut in wages that you are thinking of is such cruelty. It is savagery. It is murder, it is the damnation of souls and bodies. My people, my friends over there, your brothers and sisters in humanity, only manage to exist on what they earn at present — just manage to live. Take any part of their earnings away and children will die of hunger, boys will turn thieves, and girls — your daughters, sisters — will *have* to sell themselves in order to exist.

“This is the truth. It is not theorizing; it is fact. A girl must have food, clothes, a place to sleep. She just gets this now on the wages you pay. Cut wages in the Factory, and her body must pay for the clothes and the place to lay her head. Do you understand? As sure as you vote this wage-cut you doom a score of helpless girls to worse than damnation.

"You have done these things often in the past. That was because you did not know. You did not know of those helpless women and children, the wan widows, and the pleading, sad-eyed babes, and of how you took from them all that makes life worth living. God can forgive you for the past, because He is God. But neither God nor man can forgive you in the future, now that you know."

She seemed to break a little and waited until her voice was itself again.

"Dear brothers, our family — your family and mine — the family of humanity — has a claim on you. I press that claim now: In the name of Christ, in the name of your own wives and daughters, in the name of your very civilization, do not add this wage-cut to your many thoughtless crimes."

She ceased to speak. She looked around at them. There was not a motion in the group before her, not the roving of a single eye. They were as so many faces of stone, masks behind which no one could read a line.

"I thank you, brothers," said Ruth.

"That is all, Miss Arthur?" said the courteous chairman kindly.

"That is all. You have been very kind."

"A pleasure." The chairman smiled and bowed as she turned to go. "We have all been much interested, I am sure."

He bowed her out. The door closed softly behind her.

"And now," said the courteous chairman, stiffening his lips, "let's get down to business."

And now the world knew.

CHAPTER XXI

FREDDY and Della were not at all overwhelmed by the impending crisis. This is a peculiarity of people in love. Nations may fall and crumble back into the dust whence they sprang; civilizations may lose themselves off the face of the earth; but even unto the end the young folks will seek out secluded spots and make eager love beside the ivy on the crumbling walls. So has it been from the beginning, and so will it always be; and Clay Court, dear reader, in this regard differs not at all from the fortunate part of the world which you call your own. In fact, if the truth were carefully sought out, it is probable that it would be found that successful love making is conducted on the boulevard much along the same simple lines that win in the Tenement. For we are men and women first of all, and this is a thing that Circumstance is powerless to alter.

While the Court growled and cursed on this pleasant Saturday evening, while the stores and markets refused folks credit and the saloons did an extra business; while Rinehart screamed in the Hall, and half of the Tenement people were ready to follow him in any madness, Freddy and Della, arm in arm, the precious violin case between them, set out in a west-bound avenue car for their great test of fate. This was the night, we remember, when

Freddy was to have his chance, his real, real chance, on the programme at Electric Park.

Strange, almost incredible to relate, they made that ride in utter silence. The weight of the evening's possibilities rode heavy upon them both, and they were too honest with each other to attempt to laugh off the seriousness that ruled them. But Della's fingers on his arm told Freddy what it meant to her, and he thought of the Saturday night before, and he felt his responsibility, and the boy in that moment gave place to the man.

Binger, meeting them at the light-sprayed gate of the park, slapped Freddy on the back and bade him cheer up.

"You don't play no funeral march, you know," he said. "Ah, deh young lady. *Pleased* to haf you widt us again. I hope you haf not forgoten dat Toussang's is a respectable place."

Della thought he shook hands with just a little too much expression, but he was a swell gentleman just the same.

"You haf come oudt to see Freddy driumph, eh?"

"Sure. She came with me," said Freddy, leading the way toward the Casino, the long, low, walless building where Electric Park dispensed free music and dear drinks.

"You are deh lucky lad. Now, iff you play as well as you select your company — ha, ha, ha!"

He was in great fettle, was Binger. He had been drinking, not much, but a little, and he kept close to Della in a way that made her, the girl who was at home in any crowd, no matter how tight the press, a little uncomfort-

able. There seemed a threat in his leer, a promise of future unpleasantness in the touch of his elbow, in spite of all his magnificence, and she drew closer to Freddy as they moved along.

Save for this trifle, Della was in her element. For the night and the place and crowd were made for Joy. It is at night and in such spots that the city blooms, and becomes a garden. The garden is all artificial. Its flowers are lights and laces; its odour peanuts and patchouli. To do a picture of it use lamp black, and red and yellow. For a poem, sing of a laughing girl with rouged cheeks. It is the city triumphant. Night and care, darkness and thought are routed. The little human sheep — children, unafraid in the glare and contact with their kind, flock up like moths to a street lamp. Their feet beat together, a quick-step; their voices rattle in harmony, a symphony of nocturnal metropolitan worship of the jolly god, Who Cares? We are free! We have forgotten! Strike up the music, somebody, and let us all dance!

Della didn't say this, but probably she would if the evening had been one of less importance. She was barely touching the ground as she walked. Her head was high up, like a flower riding proudly on its stalk; and her eyes were brighter, the little red mouth redder than ever. She was intoxicated again by the flood of warm life around her, and Freddy, looking down at the jaunty little shoulders, grew warmer around the heart and stiffer about the lips. He couldn't lose now, with such a prize already won. He pinched her arm; she looked up quickly; their eyes met; and Della with her arm pressed his hand warmly

against her side. She understood. And, strangely enough, there were warm tears in her eyes, and she was glad to have them there. So it was natural that she should say, "Don't get fresh."

She hummed a tune, one of the tunes whereby Freddy would rise or fall this night, and then, looking around at the gaiety about her, she choked with the fear that smote her at the heart. If Freddy won, all this was theirs, all the lights, good clothes, freedom, pleasure! But he might not win. It was possible that he would not. Then what? Then — the dead, dark round of life in the Factory and the room in the Tenement, of course. She had a vision of the Factory, of her room, there in the midst of all the brightness.

"What's the matter, kid? Your arm's cold." They were in the Casino, and Freddy was staring down into her face. She made no answer.

"I got to leave you now. They spring the trap on me in a few minutes," he continued.

"Oh, Gawd!" whispered Della.

"Hah?"

"Nothin'. Go on." She tried to laugh, and pushed him away. "Go on; get it over with."

He saw now what it was, and smiled upon her assuringly. So she was that much interested, was she? He noted that the jaunty little shoulders quivered. He grew strong, then, did Freddy. Ah! what a fine thing it is for a young man to discover that he is all in all to a young woman!

"Don't worry, yer leddyship," he whispered; "I'm

there with the goods to-night. I can feel it in my hair."

Then he was gone, and she was alone with Binger, sitting beside him at a secluded table and staring up at the stage with eyes that trembled at the thought of Freddy's threatening appearance. He was an Extra and was to come on between Number 3 and Number 4. Number 2 now gleamed in the electric lights that announced the programme, and Della noting it, breathed a tiny sigh of relief that the crucial moment was one number away, at least.

"You are a little nervous, my dear?" suggested Binger, ogling her pleasantly.

"Say not," snapped Della. The tips of her fingers were through her cotton gloves. "Why should I be?"

Why, indeed! She stood on the brink of a chasm. Freedom of the sort she craved lay on the other side. The next hour would prove if Freddy could offer a safe bridge for the crossing. She prayed to her own peculiar gods that he could. Why should she be nervous, indeed!

That was just what Binger said.

"Dough if you was — or am not — I might perhaps suggest a lidtle trink? A small bodtle off vine——?"

"Nit," said Della, shaking her head.

"No. Dere iss no need. You are a swell looker vidoudt idt. Ha, ha! My dear, how do you like our lidtle park?"

"Gee! It's swell, after the old Factory," said Della, honestly.

"Good Godt! Iss idt possible? You work in a

fektory? You shouldt nodt do dat. No, no, my girl, you shouldt nodt work at all. You shouldt haf — friends." Binger beamed and nodded significantly. "You shouldt have friends." He leaned nearer, and his breath reached her cheek. "Idt iss living for pretty girls who have swell friendts; dat is living. I couldt findt swell friendts for you, my dear, deh swellest in diss town. And den you shouldt live as you shouldt."

"Eyah," said Della with her eyes averted. "Ought to be the millionaire kid, too."

"Millionaire? Ha, ha!" Binger's fat throat rippled. "Yes, I couldt find millionaire friendts, too. Did you effer hear of Mr. Clews? A millionaire." Binger winked, shaking his head. "My dear, you neffer was meant to work."

"Nobody knows that any better'n me," snapped Della.

"No. Andt what fektory shouldt it be you work in?"

Della told him. Binger's eyes opened wide as he sat back in surprise.

"So? Dat place? Idt iss queer business, dat," said he thoughtfully.

"What is?" asked Della.

"Dott you shouldt work in a fektory," he lied. "Never the less — you must not do idt much longer. Tink of dat swell liddle face of yours in a fektory! Vot a shame! Ha ha!"

But in his mind he was revolving the question of how strange it was that it should be Consolidated Factory money that was behind the very park in which they now were sitting.

Della didn't know. Probably she wouldn't have cared. Who cares what tips the scales? Not folk like our Della, to be sure. The new playwright, gnawing his fingers behind the scenes, while the audience renders the verdict which will bring to him affluence or failure knows something of what was in the heart of Della during those awful minutes. But only a little. For her fate had been written that fateful Saturday night of a week before, and for her there was no hope but that Freddy would win.

"Oh, gee! Why don't they hurry it up?" Numbers 2 and 3 were taking up an unconscionable time. "Do they think we came to see *them*?"

And she laughed in Binger's face boldly; and her babbling, unceasing, hectic, laughing, deceived him, and he fancied that she was smitten with J. Q. A. Binger, whereas she was only talking and giggling to hide her quaking self. And then —

"Oh, you Freddy!" "Ah! There he is." "There he is. Old cock Freddy!" "Come on, you Fritz!" The gang from the Factory was announcing Freddy's arrival.

He was standing awkwardly near the right entrance of the stage, grinning mightily on one side of his face, the other grave with the solemnity of the artist about his work. It was natural to him that he should be merrier to look at than ever, for the heart within him was beating more wildly. The glare of the footlights got into his eyes, and he grinned still more, and that rough-hearted crew in the front seats called him their rough,

endearing names and bade him "Go to it, boy; go to it, 'cause we're here to see you through."

Della sat as if sitting for her picture and drew breath in little gasps, and Freddy looked over at her and began to play.

But he had won them from the beginning with his wholesome grin. He was one of them, no matter who or what they were, the grin had put them all on an equal footing, and they, one and all, were praying that he might make good. This is the combination that makes for good work, though possibly Freddy might have gone far with even a hostile audience. For Freddy was new, different. He had known that he "had something." So had Binger. The crowd rose up and told them that they both were quite right.

"Oh, you Freddy! Come back! Come back, there. We'll have that once more if you please."

They were proud of him, relieved, happy that he had made good.

"He'ss a cardt," chuckled Binger. "He'ss a cardt. He'll draw. Hah, hah!"

But Della was stunned. She had expected to cry out his name and applauded with the rest, for no matter what the crowd's verdict, she would applaud; but now that the crisis was over, and all that she had prayed for had come to pass, she was as helpless as a babe. It was too much, too sudden. She saw what it meant to her, for the woman in her had whispered what would come to pass this evening. She sat dumb and motionless while the crowd applauded, while Freddy played his last encore and

bowed his grinning way out of sight: and while the next number was flashed in the lights. It was all over; he had made good; they were free.

Suddenly she came to life and started up as if to run to him in spite of the chairs, the tables, the crowd, everything. She was overwhelmed. She was angry, maddened. It was their triumph; his and hers. The crowd — what right had it to share in it? She was jealous. The crowd was taking him for its own. And he was hers, only hers; for he was all she had. She rose, gripped the table, swayed forward with parted lips — and then she sat down suddenly, carefully fussed with her back hair, and even while so engaged said carelessly to Binger:

“Hot stuff to-night — with the gang — wasn’t he?”

“A cardt!” gurgled Binger eying the typhoon of drinks ordered after the applause. “A cardt.”

Was it true! Could it be true? Or was it only another of those dreams with the bitter awakening? Had this thing really happened for them? From seven-fifty to twenty-five a week! Only Clay Court is qualified to appreciate this experience. Yet Della managed to laugh with Binger as if it was nothing to her.

When Freddy came, red, sweating, and solemn, to sit beside them she said: “S’pose you’ll get the swell head and buy a cane now, won’t you?”

“No,” said Freddy. “But I’ll buy you some lemonade.”

“I will puy,” said Binger. “But — lemonade? No!”

“Lemonade, yes!” snapped Della. “Nothing but.”

"So?" Binger's broad mouth grew broader, more pleasant. He was considerable of an epicure, Binger. "Lemonade, den. Andt, Mr. Freddy; you may consider yourself engached. Twenty-five per, begin Vensdday night; andt if you needt something in adtvance I gif idt to you now."

Freddy's heart leaped with a thump that Della heard; but on his face there was no exultation, no surprise.

"No, thanks," he said carelessly. "Don't need any now."

And Della, knowing the condition of his finances, nearly fell off her chair from pride.

"I got to get some new strings," continued Freddy. "That's all my extra expenses. Help me remember it Tuesday, will you, Dell?"

"I couldt haf the leadter order them," suggested Binger generously.

"I'll get 'em myself," said Freddy. "I want to pick 'em out."

"You are a goodt picker," agreed Binger, and again his eyes were on Della.

Far back in the Casino had sat a pale, bored little man with thick strings to his eye-glasses. At Freddy's first bar he had looked up. A minute later he was almost interested. Now he came down and drew Binger to one side.

"Who was it?" he demanded. "Tell me of him with the red hair. Do you know that the West Side has got its own music at last? No, not music, either. Slang. That's it; the real George Ade article. The red head

plays it. Tell me who he is so I can immortalize him for half a column Monday morning."

A great, glorious night, greater, more glorious than they had dreamed of! The first moment they were alone, Freddy, pinching Della's arm, said, "Well, we put it over, eh, pal?"

CHAPTER XXII

FREE!

Outside the thousand-lighted gate, out in the street where the gleam and roar of the park were behind them, Della and Freddy clasped hands and looked at each other with daring eyes. The test was over. They had won. It was intoxicating, almost sickening. It was something like the sensation of the starved man who suddenly finds his belly full of food. They were free. They dared to live now. They dared! And so they went steadily down the dark street, their hands interlinked so the palms pressed close together, seeking only to quit the crowds that they might be alone.

The glamour and pull of the park had lost its hold even on Della. Something greater, stronger, more wonderful had taken its place. The park, the lights, the giggling crowds had drawn her because they promised happy forgetfulness for an hour, two hours. But this was something else — something better than forgetfulness: and by the magic that flew through her and encircled her as they walked on, it seemed to Della that this new something gave promise of happiness eternal. At all events, one moment of Freddy then was worth an hour of the park. So they went on.

The street led on to the boulevard. The boulevard

led to the park. They followed a path to a seat by the lagoon, and the moon looked at them from the water and from the sky. They sat holding hands like a couple of children; and Nature promptly proceeded to weave its spell.

“We’ll have a house of our own,” blurted Freddy at last. “Yes, b’jees, we will. We’ll save our money and buy it on easy payments. We’ll buy a lot out here somewhere, first, that’s what we’ll do. Then we’ll have it built just the way we want it.”

“Cottage?” said Della, to show that she had followed the awesome leap of Freddy’s mind.

“Sure. Mustn’t have it too big.” Freddy was your true dreamer who realizes the complete picture at one jump. “Nice, low cottage. Back from the street. Grass in front; coloured glass in the front door; lace curtains in the front windows. A yard, sure, just like these places around here.”

“How many rooms?”

“Five, six, mebbe.”

“Gee! What’ll we do with six all? Six rooms; you’n me — ”

She stopped. Freddy opened his mouth to speak, and he stopped likewise. Then they looked at each other slowly, slyly at first, each seeking to read the other’s face without detection, then more boldly until in the end they were facing each other, their eyes eager to tell all the mysteries, the new-found tenderness and wonder that the suddenly coming thought had conjured up. And only their eyes could tell; for the feeling was too

vague, too fine, too thrilling, too strange to find utterance at their inexperienced lips.

The clasp of their hands grew firmer, more trustful. Slowly, unconsciously they drew closer together, as if the mutual touch of the bodies was necessary for their swelling hearts. A blush mounted faintly to Della's cheek. Gradually her eyes lowered, and with them lowered her head, until, as naturally as the twining of the vine to the oak, it found a resting place upon Freddy's breast. The wise old moon, if it noticed, must have smiled with proper tenderness. Della snuggled her nose more closely against the vest upon which she rested. She felt the pump of the honest heart beneath it, and she pressed closer to it, hungry to show the last degree of her new-found dependence.

"Gee!" she whispered. "Who'd 'a' 'thunk it? Eh?"

And the wise old moon, having heard a new expression of an eternally old feeling, must have smiled again.

"Sure," said Freddy, clearing his throat. "We—we'll need six rooms all right."

"Shut up," whispered Della. "You make me blush like a child."

"We'll give 'em an education. Yes, b'jees," — Freddy's mind ran bitterly back to his own starved childhood — "our kids are going to school, and have a chance to play!"

"Shut up!" repeated Della, raising her head and looking up at the sky. "Gee! What a bee-yootiful pipe-dream."

"Nix. Nix on that. No dream here. It's a sure

thing for us. Didn't you hear what I was going to catch?"

"But it's too good to be true, Freddy."

"Wait, watch, and listen," retorted Freddy. "We hain't had many good things in our life; that's why it seems like it can't be true. But it is — it's going to be. I know it. I knew it all the time. Why, when I was a sawed-off little kid washing bottles in a shoe polish fact'ry in the basement and sleeping under the sink, I knew something was going to happen some day that'd gimme' a chance for something like this. I knew it. An' that was before I knew I could fiddle. I been waitin' for it a million years. It don't faze me, honest. Don't worry, Della; it's only a case o' waitin' now till the dream comes true."

"Gee, if it only would!"

"Why, it will, honey!"

"I never knew of it happ'ning. Never knew anybody ever had such luck."

"What's that gotto do with us?"

"I never figured myself such a winner — never counted on anything big — like this." Passionately she flung herself upon him. "Oh, you, Freddy, boy," she cried. "You make me feel so good that I'm afraid — afraid, that's what's the matter with me. I never expected nothing like this. I never hoped for it, 'cause I knew it wouldn't do no good. And — "

"We hadn't met then, Dell!"

"No. No, that's so." Della was silent, and Freddy looked at the hand he was holding. It was a small hand,

the hand of a woman — child, but the tips of the fingers were worn to callouses and discoloured beneath the skin.

“Oh, Freddy.” The girl beamed with a sudden idea as she followed his glance. “I’ll get that off now — I’ll have a chance to get my fingers clean.”

“You know it.”

“Haven’t had ’em clean since — since —” Her voice dropped and stopped as memory ran back over the long barren years of what should have been her childhood.

“When did yuh start tuh work, Della?”

“Twelve.”

“Twelve!”

“Uh, huh! In the Fact’ry. An’ I never had ’em clean, real clean since.”

“But now yuh will. An’ yuh won’t never get ’em glued up again, ayether, yer leddyship.”

“No?” Again she threw herself upon him with the passionate bodily appeal for protection. “Oh, is it true, Freddy? Am — am I — free?”

“You are, yer leddyship,’ said Freddy, “you sure are.”

She was crying frankly, now, half-laughter, half-tears, clinging to the lean, strong shoulders above her as if the world and all depended upon them.

“Why — why weep, yer leddyship?”

“Feeling good, that’s all,” said Della, shaking her head. “Can’t I cry if I wanto laugh?”

“You sure can,” said Freddy, “you sure can. I know how you feel. You hain’t had such an awful scream of it, either, have you, hon’?”

Her mouth pouted like a child as she ruminated

perhaps, on what might have been. Her fingers played tenderly with a coat button.

"Nope," she said with a quaver in the voice, shaking her head thoughtfully. "Nope."

"I'll make it up for you, kid," he whispered; and she whispered back brokenly, "I know you will, Fred; I know you will. You got to. Because — 'cause you've done so much for me, Freddy, so much — you'll never know."

"Who? Me? I — "

"Done it all, Freddy, boy; you've saved me. Gee!" She sat up smiling through her tears with the look of a child. "Gee! Just think of what's before us — all because we just happened to get to know each other. Ain't it wonderful? Why, say, I feel's if I hadn't been living before. Just as if I've only been sleeping along waitin' for this to come and wake me up. Gee, it's a good world —" she snuggled close to him again — "when you've got a Freddy for your own."

But a moment later she seemed to shudder, and he whispered, "Now, what is it, hon'?"

Her little face was white and cold as it turned up to him. Into her eyes flew the old, old fear that life had driven into her from the days of her infancy. There is the Death of Hope in this Fear. Its name is Poverty.

"Ah!" whispered Della chokingly. "You gotto, you gotto make good, Freddy. If you don't — I'm gone — I'm gone; that's all."

He drew her closer to him. He lifted her to his lap. He understood. His thin arms drew her hungrily toward

his body; and he felt the little breasts crush themselves against his ribs. She was panting in a mingling of passion and fear.

"Be good to me," she pleaded with her lips on his coat. "You see what you've done now."

"Sure," he whispered. "It's all right."

They were very serious. Life suddenly had become a wonderful unsuspected dream. Hitherto they had lived with the thoughtlessness of two lively young animals. Habit and instinct sufficed for the direction of their existence. To-day was yesterday in repetition, to-morrow would be another to-day. Nature had not laid on them her claim of the sexes. Life had not begun to be significant. Suddenly all this was changed. Their time had come. That remorseless spinner, Nature, finding them ripe for her purpose had proceeded to weave with them, working them into one more infinitesimal mesh in the great net of life of which we are all a part. So does Nature weave always. Her indifference to the individual is more than sublime. Her work is the apotheosis of concentration. For Nature has only one care, one idea with which she concerns herself to the exclusion of all else — to see that the net is supplied with meshes and that the weaving goes ever on.

In this moment these two ordinary young people of the tenement saw the heights. For the time they might have been primitive beings in an unsullied garden of Eden. The young eternal impulses were their masters. The brick and mortar shells that housed them were gone from the earth. The earth was bare, made anew. The

trite bonds of circumstances were broken. They were free. They were awakened, man and woman in love in a primitive world of misty blackness, softened and mellowed by dim, far-away lights.

"Remember," whispered Freddy, "those dark brown days are over. We begin to *live* now."

Then the crunch of an officer's heel on the gravel brought them back to earth.

Slowly they quitted their trysting place, careless of the place or hour, forgetful of all but the joy within them. The streets had grown comfortably empty. Here a group of young men gathered raggedly at a corner; there a middle-aged reveller staggered home sedately — using the whole sidewalk in his devious progress. Other pairs like themselves strolled slowly along, the man's arm boldly clasping his companion's waist — even the pause for an occasional embrace was not lacking. Still other pairs stood in the darkened hallways, their low-toned murmuring conversation ceasing as footsteps approached their trysting place and promptly resuming when the pedestrian had passed by. All undisturbed, Freddy and Della went, left quite alone as was their wish, and they had but little to say. They had spoken back there in the park, and had said it all. They were not possessed of many words. Now it was only left to dream happily over and over again the tale that had been told, to ponder upon the eternal mystery in which they had become enveloped. And could a careful observer have beheld them as they passed under the corner lights he would have marvelled that such faces belonged in Clay Court.

They turned into the Court. Suddenly they sprang apart. Half a dozen men, their heads close together, were listening to a speaker. He was Rinehart, and he was promising them "War, by —! War!"

Then Della grew cold and shuddered, as one who is waked from a pleasant dream.

"What's the matter?" asked Freddy

"Nothing; nothing 'tall,'" gulped Della. But to herself she repeated: "It's too good — it's too good to come true."

CHAPTER XXIII

DINNY NOONAN didn't polish his lamp post that next Sunday morning. Neither did she of the wonderful tresses stand in the windows of No. 39 and luxuriate in her shiny, black hair. Dinny's post of duty was surrounded by a group of sullen, undershirted men long before the leisurely Dinny had rubbed the sleep from his bleary eyes and wandered forth to seek his morning drink; and the girl with the hair leaned on her sharp elbows and looked sullenly out of the window, entirely indifferent to the glory that tumbled in tangles down her back. What was the use of combing even the finest hair in the world when men stood in the street below and neglected breakfast? What is the use of breakfast when the end of the world may come to-morrow? Who cares for the future when the future may be nil?

"If we only knew, one way or the other," muttered the undershirts.

But no one knew. They had gathered around the Sunday papers when they came up the Avenue, and they had been bitterly disappointed. Even the least careful of those careless journals refused to do more than venture a guess at what had taken place at the Directors' meeting the afternoon before. The undershirts kicked the papers into the street and shoved their hands in

their pockets; and the Court quickly proceeded to take upon itself an atmosphere of painful suspense, suspense liberally mingled with hate.

It was the Sabbath again, but Sabbath in name only. There was none of the wonderful quiet that ushered in other weeks, none of the luxurious loafing. A strange, nervous activity which manifested itself in aimless cursing, curt answers, and a desire to quarrel, ruled from the beginning. Sunday was only a space that had to be endured, that was the trouble. It had revealed nothing; it would reveal nothing. It was a space of blank hours. Until sometime Monday, or until the Company pleased, Clay Court must wait in angry suspense to find out what the fates would do to it; and the manner in which it waited was not nice to behold.

The Tenement, and the whole Court itself, of course, was hotter, stinkier, more hopeless than ever. The heat rose from the rotten cedar paving blocks in heavy, odour-laden waves. The Tenement seemed to gurgle with its heated, bubbling life. Out of doors, in-doors, everywhere, the flies buzzed in inconceivable numbers, their maddening drone adding insolent torture to the slow hours. And all these material manifestations of barrenness had their counterpart in the hollow actions of the human beings whom they helped to drive to desperation.

“Paw,” bawled some children, “ain’t we going to the picnic to-day?”

“Naw.”

“Aw! Why ain’t we going to the picnic, to-day, paw?”

"Shut up! I'll bust you in the ear if you bother me any more."

Said a wife to her ordinarily useful husband, "You going to fix that table leg to-day like you promised?"

"Be still, woman," was the answer, "'tis no time for wasting time like that."

A gentleman who came to visit a friend in the Tenement said, "What? I didn't know there was any one dead here?" A moment later, after studying his friend's face, he whispered, "Say, Bill, who you going to kill?"

Truly, a rare Sunday. The bells from up Avenue sent down their sweet-tongued message; but the atmosphere of Clay Court caught it and turned it into a meaningless clamour of brass.

One scene, one only, there was out of doors that stands forth in memory as not hard to look at. A child — a three-year-old — sat with his back against a garbage box and played with a pup. It was a sorry looking pup, half-starved, dirty, sore-eared — almost as sorry looking as the child. They were twins, they were supremely happy. The child talked and the pup barked. Then they both laughed, laughed with eyes and mouths, and ears and toes, as only pups and babes can laugh. The pup dove in sideways, snatching playfully at the child's dress, received the feeble clout on the ear that it expected, leaped joyfully back, fell over itself, and stood off at a distance, head to one side, alertly watching the next move of its little playfellow.

"Hee-yah!" commanded the child, and the pup sidled up and licked his face.

“Ain’t he sweet?” The child honoured me by asking when he saw that I watched with as much appreciation as a dull adult might show. “Ain’t he sweet!”

The pup turned around and barked at me; the child jerked him by the tail. Then a swaggering, clamouring crew swept past on its way to the Hall, and I was forced to move on.

The child and the pup in the lee of the garbage box, their bright eyes and their care-free laughs, stand out in the memory. They prove one thing: there are flowers even in such barren spots as Clay Court on this Sunday.

Up in the Hall, Rinehart laboured away like the natural storm centre of all the restlessness around him. His tight little mouth was distorted by a smile of unmistakable self-satisfaction, the smile of a man who has prepared and concealed a Surprise. The smile puzzled most of his followers. A few understood. Among these was our bland and amiable friend, Mr. Bruggers.

Asked Mr. Perkins of Mr. Bruggers during the heat of the afternoon meeting: “Did you ever read American history?”

“Not to remember it, Mr. Perkins, not to remember it.”

“Then you don’t know why this is different from the Boston Tea Party.”

And yet this was the Sunday, black as it was, that the Day dawned for Little Joey.

It was very quiet up in the room where he lay. It was very comfortable in the wonderful, clean bed. And

for the first time since his removal there Joey's faculties were entirely clear, and he appreciated the marvellous qualities of his surroundings.

Joey lay flat on his back, as still as a watching mouse, his quick, bright eyes receiving vivid impressions of everything about him. There was method in his scrutiny. He knew that soon he would have to leave all this wonderful cleanliness, and he wanted to have it to remember when he was down there in the dark closet of the third floor rear.

"When do I go back?" he asked suddenly of me, seeing that I was sitting near him.

"Back where, Joey?"

"Back to work — and downstairs."

"Well, to tell the truth, Joey, I don't think you're going back at all."

"Hah?"

"Joey," I continued, "how would you like to go to work for me when you get on your feet?"

Joey feebly wrinkled his little forehead and stared up in bitter disappointment.

"You got a factory?"

He had looked for better things in any one who was Miss Ruth's friend.

"Sure thing."

"Aw! Bet Miss Ruth don't know it."

"Oh, yes, she does."

Joey shook his head. "No, no; she wouldn't stand for it."

I took a good hold of myself and began seriously:

"Well, you see this is a different kind of factory from

any you ever heard of, Joey. It's what you might call a health factory. It makes little boys, and everybody else who works in it big and strong, and the longer you work the better — ”

“Aw!” sneered Joey. “You can't con me.”

“Con you?”

“The longer you work — free overtime, eh?”

It was a little time before I fully understood, and a little longer before I could trust myself to go on.

“Give me a chance to explain, Joey,” I pleaded. “Let me tell you about my factory. It's one of the funniest factories you ever hear of. Never heard of a health factory before, did you? Of course not. That's what my factory is. It's all out of doors. Ever hear of a factory all out of doors, Joey? No? Well, that's one of the reasons why this is a health factory. All out of doors, so you get fresh air and sun all the time, and that helps to make you big and strong.”

“Whata you make there?”

“Make? Oh! — hay, for one thing.”

“Hay?”

“Yes.”

“What for?”

“To feed horses and cows with.”

“Make them, too?”

More silence. Joey wondered why I had to turn my face away once in awhile.

“No-o, we don't make horses and cows exactly, but we help 'em grow. We make corn, and potatoes, and apples, and berries — ”

"Aw, I know!" cried Joey. "A farm — like they have in the rube plays down at the Bi-jo."

"Right you are. Want to come out and work for me, when you're stronger?"

"What doing?"

"Well — catching grasshoppers. How would you like to do that, Joey?"

"Donno. Hard?"

"No. You see I'm pretty particular about the way I have the grasshoppers caught on my farm. I want you to do it like this: You go out and sit in the grass — in the shade some place. If you're sleepy you roll over and take a snooze. If you're hungry you shout for something to eat. If you're thirsty you do just the same. If you want to move you move, and if you want to stay you stay. And if any big, sassy grasshopper comes up and tries to run over you, you call for somebody to come up and put a rope around his neck and lead him away to the stable. Then you —"

"Oh," said Joey. "Kidding me, eh?" I had to retire to save my face.

It took Ruth to make it clear to him and to make him believe it. He was not going back to the factory, nor to the closet on the third floor rear and the life that had choked him. He was going away.

"The old lady?" interrupted Joey. "She won't stand for it."

It would be very pretty to say here that Joey balked because of an overwhelming love for his mother. But it would be very silly, too, because it would be so patently

untrue. Joey naturally was a much-loving child, but love for a drunken mother does not thrive at all in a dark third floor closet, nor for that matter any place in the Tenement. Love does not thrive there at all; that is the curse.

The "old lady," it was explained, had been — had been won over to the new programme. First, as soon as he could be moved, he was going out to the farm.

"They got a Supe to watch you out there?"

It was explained that it wouldn't make any difference if they had. . . . Then he was to stay there until he was strong, big and strong, and, after that, go to school.

It took a long time to convince Joey that such things could happen. He was a harsh and shrewd little skeptic. He asked if the farm wasn't a new name for Pontiac. The reform school he could understand; he had seen plenty of kids taken away to go there.

It must be written that he wasn't greatly elated even after Ruth had driven the truth home. Already the hopelessness of the poor had fastened itself upon Joey, the hopelessness which says: nothing good can come to us. But this he did say after he had lain awhile and thought over the possibilities that had been opened up to him:

"Say! How's Old Mag?"

Mag was getting better, she said, and it is certain that she was much more cheerful. She, too, was to be taken care of, though with her it would be more difficult to break the news. She was so certain that she was down for only a few days that even Ruth dreaded and delayed

the moment when Mag must be informed that a sanitarium was her destination.

Mag was even planning her first day's work.

"It won't be much longer that I'll be laying here flat on my back, a nuisance to everybody and no good to myself. I know lots of shops where they'll be putting on power operators this time of the year. It won't take long to land once I'm on my feet."

And Joey, having been assured about Mag, rolled over on his side and went to sleep, feeling that a door had been opened to reveal something to him, he knew not what.

Black night fell upon the streets like a twofold curse. As ever the heat seemed to rise with the darkness. Brick, iron, stone, and wood were hot to the touch, and sleep was all but out of the question. Up on the roofs once more the weary programme of tossing women and moaning children. Down in the saloons the ghastly effort at forgetfulness. Fighting was common; and once a woman's voice rang out terribly in a lull: "My Gawd! He's sticking him! Get the knife — get the knife, quick!"

"Oh, Freddy, Freddy!" whispered Della as they sat together and listened to the turmoil. Just that and nothing more. And Freddy understood; for he, too, yearned for the nearby day when the curse of it all could be shaken off. Poor Freddy!

A slight breeze came up and blew tantalizingly over the scene, as hot as the breath of a flesh-eating monster. Nature herself seemed to be taking a hand in the crisis,

testing man's endurance to the limits of sanity with the cruelties of her uncooled night. A cold rain might have prevented what happened two days later, as at Waterloo a lack of it might have saved Napoleon. But, as at Waterloo, it was not to be.

Gray, gaunt morning reared its head in the east. Oh, the tale that is writ in the desolateness of poor city streets at dawn! Then the virgin day mocks the efforts of man with the deadliness of the scene it reveals. The soul of the city is gone. Only the flesh, scantily covering the bones, remains. Life is hidden. The city is dead, dead and laid out for all prowling eyes to see. It is not made for such exhibition; and it makes a horrifying corpse.

And Clay Court, weary from lack of sleep, and stupid from heat, rose up and greeted the day and prepared to find what the next twelve hours held for it.

CHAPTER XXIV

FREDDY long had nourished a secret ambition. It was to tell the Superintendent exactly what he was.

Monday morning was the preferable time, some dark-blue Monday morning when the Superintendent was at his ugly worst. It was on Monday that the Superintendent gloated most gleefully in his sense of dominion over those unfortunate enough to be in his charge. At eight-thirty he received from the hands of the time-keeper the time report and, casting his glassy eye over the long tale of names, saw who was on time, who late, and who not present at all. In this moment he resumed the wand of authority which had slipped from his hands with the closing of the Factory doors Saturday night. Six days of the week he was a Superintendent; on the seventh he became a mere "family man." The stitching room thought it was Sunday liquor that caused him to curse the room on a Monday morning. It was not: it was Wife.

"Brr-oop!" said the Superintendent, his eyes following down the list of names handed to him by the shrinking time-keeper. "Hoomph!" And this particular Monday morning happened to follow a Sabbath upon which the wifely temper had been harsh, indeed

"Yessir," whined the time-keeper. "It is fierce the way they don't get down Monday morning."

"Brr-ow-wow!"

"A shame!" The time-keeper interpreted his master's growls with satisfactory accuracy. "Wonder is you get the work out with such a gang of useless hounds to work with. Aren't many could do it, sir."

"Hu-nah!"

"Fired they ought to be in a bunch; yessir."

"Huh!"

This last expressive monosyllable brought the time-keeper up with a jerk. It was the Superintendent's way of saying that he had had enough sympathetic sycophancy for the time being, the day's work had begun.

"These two," the Superintendent's fingers pointed out two names. "Ever lay off before?"

The time-keeper craned his neck over the other's shoulder.

"These two," repeated the Superintendent, pointing out the names of Della and Freddy. "Have they ever laid off before on a Monday morning?"

"I think they have; yessir," replied the time-keeper promptly. He didn't think anything of the sort, but he knew that this morning his superior craved blood, and being small and weak of soul he perjured himself accordingly.

"Think? Don't you know?"

"Yessir. They have laid off before. They're regular —"

“Send ‘em to me if they show up at noon. I’ll put an end to these Monday morning hang-overs. I’ll — ” He proceeded to vent his spleen in thundering abuse, and he still was telling what he would do to this unlucky pair, when Freddy calmly sauntered into his presence.

The Superintendent started and gasped. Sauntering in his presence was a thing undreamed of. People hurried, scurried, ran, jumped, stumbled, trembled before him. They never sauntered. As well look for a convict waltzing before the bear-eyed warden as an employé sauntering before the Superintendent. And yet here Freddy was sauntering, and to render his conduct perfectly diabolical, “Hey!” he called. “I want to speak to you.”

“Wha-what?” The Superintendent leaned against a table to support himself. “You — you talking to me?”

“Yes, indeed, Skroobonio; yes, indeed,” replied Freddy pleasantly. “Pause and give ear to me. For I have something to s’y to you.”

“Huh?”

“Something to s’y to you.” Freddy beamed and nodded at the dumfounded official in a manner most pleasantly patronizing. The Superintendent’s discomfiture was like honey in the young man’s mouth. “Don’t be rushed, please, ’cause if you do you’ll cook yourself with me, and I’ll get peevish. As I was s’ying, I have something to s’y to you, and there’s quite a lot of it, and I’m going to take my time.”

“What the — ” began the Superintendent, but

beyond this primitive explosion words failed him utterly. The impossible had happened — an employé stood at ease before his frowns! The tyrant blustered, exploded feebly, and sat down. And then Freddy opened his soul and began.

“You see it’s this way,” he said blithely. “You’ve had a lot to say to me; now I’m returning past favours, and no questions asked. Did you ever think when you were shooting it into me that there might come a day, some sweet morning ‘bout like this when that game might work with the reverse English, with me as the shooter and you as the shootee? Answer: ‘No, I never did?’ Why didn’t you? Answer: ‘Why should I? I’m the boss.’ Yes, my dearly beloved Skroobonio, you are. But didn’t you ever stop to think that the people you boss are people just like yourself, and you happen to be running ‘em just because they’re working in this stitching-room in this factory? ‘No, no,’ said he with a frown, ‘I never did.’ Then, my dear, old, sour-faced Skroobonio, let this be a lesson to you. For here’s one chee-ild who’s quit being one of your slaves and has come down to-day just for the sake of telling you what a dirty, white-livered, kid-bullying, girl-scaring — you are.”

“Hold on!” The Superintendent had moved. “Don’t tear your shirt, old cacky, with those quick moves, ’cause if you do I’ll have to drive you one between the eyes. That’s right, sit down and listen, Skroobonio; you’ll never get such a chance to hear what a rat you are as long as you live.

“Why, say, Skroobonio, you’ve been so mean to the

poor folks that had to work under you, that when you die and go to hell the devil'll say, 'Who's this?' and when you tell him, he'll ask what you done on earth, and when you tell him that he'll say, 'Phew! Get to hell out of here. You must think we can stand for *everything*,' and slam the bars in your face. Why, honest, Skroobonio, if you could see how you look to decent people, you'd say, 'Is that me?' and pick out a nice hole in the lake and go out past the crib and do the German.

"Yessir, you're too mean for hell. There's only one place for you. You've got it. They had to have a rat in pants to make this room pay, so they got you." Freddy stopped and looked his victim over with terrible eyes. "You — I don't wish you any hard luck, but I do hope you get caught by the heels in the shafting and wind around a pulley an inch at a time. That's all. You might think of the kids you've abused while you was winding around."

"Get out!" shrieked the Superintendent, gaining control of his tongue after a struggle. "Get out, or I'll have you thrown out."

"All right, Skroobonio, I'm going. But next time you fire a kid for being so weak he can't hustle, remember how I quit, and — aw, you pup, you ain't worth troubling about."

After which abrupt ending to a somewhat unchristian but decidedly natural discourse, Freddy turned on his heels, snapped his fingers at the dusty factory room from which he was escaping, and went out for good, slamming the door behind him.

As he passed out had he troubled to look he might have seen a man tacking a notice above the time-keeper's window. It was the announcement of the long-expected cut in wages, but Freddy didn't stop to see.

At the corner Della was waiting.

"Well?"

"Well?"

"You didn't scrap."

"How do you know?"

"Cause your knuckles ain't cracked."

"No," laughed Freddy. "No, we didn't scrap, yer ledgyship. I just told him he was a bad boy, and —"

"Bad boy! I'll bet you did!"

"And a few other things, I was going to say. And now" — he took her by the arm and turned her about, so she faced the Factory — "take a good look at it and kiss it good-bye forever."

"Good-bye!" laughed Della, gaily throwing a kiss at the ugly gray building. "I hope you choke."

Then arm in arm they wandered eastward in the face of the sun, their eyes blinking, their feet stumbling, clumsy in the unwonted light of day and the sense of freedom. The world was a new-made place to them. It had been dark, old, tiresome. Now it was filled with the light of hope, the light which the gods placed before the eyes of man when they bade him endure his lot in patience. Life was a thing worth while, and they were very happy.

"What shall we do?" asked Della.

"I don't care." Their plans were indefinite. Who

needs to plan when he is happy? It was first come, first taken. A big, green-painted car rolled up to the corner and stopped.

“The long green,” said Freddy.

“All aboard.” They hopped to the platform, Della flushed and giggling.

“Where does it go?” she asked.

“To the end of the line,” said Freddy.

“Where’s that?”

“I dunno. I s’y, conny, how far do you go?”

“Tuh th’ cimitary,” replied the conductor in sepulchral tones.

They leaped off as precipitately as they had come on. “‘Cimitary?’” repeated Freddy. “We were going the wrong way. Come on! Here’s one coming on the other side.”

Hurriedly they crossed the street and entered an east-bound car.

“How far do you go?” asked Freddy.

“Art Institute,” replied the conductor.

“What’s that?” said Della.

“A place,” said the conductor, “where they keeps paintings, and drawings, and statues — Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden — no clothes. Heh, heh, heh! It’s a great place, they tell me. I was never there. Some day — some day when I’m off and my wife’s away — I’m going. Heh, heh, heh! By golly! It must be a great place. All kinds of statues, they tell me — and no clothes. More pictures of *that* kind than a fancy saloon. Wonder they ain’t pinched, by golly, ‘tis.”

"It's what they call Art," said Freddy. "That goes where the rough-neck thing gets pinched."

"Anyhow, it's no place for us." Della tossed her head emphatically. "None of this sporting life for us now. Get off."

They were in the street again, laughing at the novelty of their adventures.

"Where now?" asked Della.

"Little care I," said Freddy. "Suppose we flop a coin to see 'f we're going or coming."

"Let's — oh, sa-ay!"

Before them a dark-skinned Sicilian was spraying the bright-hued stock of his little flower stand. Della grew serious.

"Say, Freddy," she said, in a tone that reproached them both as one, "d'you know we're awful selfish?"

"We are?"

"Sure we are. Here's us sporting round, and over home there's Joey and Mag flat on their backs, and — and I bet a dollar they'd just be tickled to death if they had a carnation or two to look at."

"I never thought of that," admitted Freddy.

"Neither did I," said Della, "till I saw these flowers. But 'tain't right of us, hugging all this joy business of ours. Let's split it up with them. Eh?"

"As how?"

Della stepped up to the flower stand.

"How much a dozen?" she asked, pointing to the bright carnations.

"Oh!" said Freddy. "Now I get you." He paid

for her selections, eying her the while with a new tenderness, even a new pride.

"You're a peach," he said softly. "Still I always knew this was the right *you*."

"Whatever that means," said Della.

"You look more natural carrying flowers to sick kids than eating lobsters at night."

"Natural!" sniffed Della. "Oh, I dunno."

They got on a car and went back to hot, stinky Clay Court. Della held the tissue paper covered blooms with both hands, to guard them from injury. She was very pretty. Freddy, looking on, occasionally interrupted his look of admiration to shake his head and treat one side of his face — the side away from Della, to a quizzical grin. "And *she* loves the gay life!" he sneered inwardly. "Nit. Not so it hurts her, anyhow."

They went down Clay Court arm in arm, and the Court looked out of its windows and saw how it was with them.

"Bless 'em, the' darlin's," muttered a sweaty woman. "'Twas so I was once; me an' me Dinny. The saints bliss 'em, say I, though Dinny's now getting piped down't the cahrner s'loon."

"Calves!" sneered Rinehart, superiorly. "Calves!"

But Old Mag raised her head from the pillow and smiled when they entered her room.

"Laid off?" she questioned, surprised at their unwanted week-day appearance.

"No, not laid off, Mag," said Della. "We quit; honest, we did. Here," she continued hurriedly, blushing

under Mag's questioning scrutiny, "here's a few pinkies, for you. Like 'em?"

But Old Mag was more interested in the pretty confusion in Della's blue eyes than in the pink flowers.

"What did you quit for?" she asked.

"D'you like carnations?" persisted Della.

"You can't fool me, child," cried Mag, lifting her head to look from one to the other. "You two's engaged. I bet you laid off to get married! Well, now, what do you think about that? You two getting married!"

"We didn't say we was," said Della.

"You dear kid!" said Mag. "Come here." Two white, wasted hands reached up and held the young flushed face between them. She was drinking at the fount of another's happiness, was Mag, and that patient, unselfish heart grew warm with the reflected joy. There was a mist in her eyes; and, perhaps, after all, there was a little speck of wistfulness in her expression as she beheld the complete bliss which never had been, never could be hers. For no lover's arms had ever touched Old Mag, no lover's kisses ever had lingered upon her lips. Perhaps she had dreamed of such things. Perhaps even the power to dream had been starved in her. But at all events she was now alight with true womanly satisfaction at this spectacle of a pleasing match.

"You'll be happy, kid," she whispered as Della bent down and kissed her. "He won't never turn drunkard on you and make you go working again. He'll be good to you."

"He'll have to!" laughed Della. Then she told the secret of Freddy's great good fortune.

"Well, ain't that grand!" beamed Mag. "Why, you'll be real swell. You'll be forgetting you ever knew us."

"Eyah. Like ducks forgetting how to swim. Don't you ever think it."

"We want you to get on your pins and be in at the wedding," said Freddy.

"I'll be there," said Mag. "I'm feeling stronger every day."

"You're looking better, too," lied Freddy, honestly. "Ain't she, Dell?"

"Of course. And here, Mag, take these flowers now, 'cause I'm getting tired holding them out to you. Go on, now," she warned as Mag drew back, "they're for you. We got 'em for you. Ain't they pretty?"

"You didn't?" said Mag, still not taking the flowers.

"We did."

"For me?" There was something in the thin voice that made even Della choke.

"Sure, for you."

"But — why — "

"Aw, don't be asking questions," interrupted Della vigorously. "Here, take 'em."

She hurriedly thrust part of the bouquet into Mag's hand, hurriedly placed the rest in a glass on the table, and, still hurrying, swung back to the bed and kissed the white, tight forehead with a smack that rang through the room.

"Don't you go trying any thanking game on me," she laughed huskily, taking Freddy by the arm and dragging him toward the door. "S'long, Mag; remember we want to see you up soon."

Mag lay and watched them silently as they went out. The flowers were in her hands and her hands were folded upon her breast. She was smiling.

"Gee!" said Della out in the hall. "I like to have trun a fit."

Whereat Freddy kissed her.

They found little Joey propped up in bed with a picture book on his lap and alone for the time being. Here was where Freddy shone.

"What're you doing here loafing in bed when you ought to be up chasing around," he roared in heavy tones. "Trying to four-flush about being sick? Come out of it, kiddo; you don't look any sicker'n a three-horse truck. Why, you look ready to scrap anybody within ten pounds of your weight on the street — On the square, Joey," he ended in another tone, "you're looking all to the good. Feeling all right, ain't you?"

"Sure," piped Joey. "Wasn't much sick, anyhow. What you doing off to-day? Did they strike?"

"Not a little bit, Joey. *They* didn't; we did, Della and me. Took a day off to come around and bother people. Let him sniff the posies, Della! We picked 'em off the trolley posts coming up. Whoa! Don't eat 'em; they're only made to smell."

"You shut up, Freddy," said Della directly. "You

gas away too much for well folks to stand. Joey, you'll be up in a couple days now, won't you?"

"Sure," said Joey. "Then I'm going to work for Mr. Lord, out in the country."

"Swell!" cried Della. "I knew he'd be framing something up for you. You'll get as big and strong as a house."

They petted him and joked with him, and when they left, Joey said, "I'll be out of bed Wednesday. The doctor says so." His face lighted up at his thoughts of the future. "There won't be any Supe," he said finally, and Della and Freddy understood.

They came out of the Tenement. They turned toward the Avenue, and ran straight into a crowd of men from the Factory. It was not yet twelve o'clock.

"What's the reason?" asked Freddy. "Did you strike?"

"Sure, we struck," replied a young man. "What'd you expect us to do; thank 'em for cutting us down?"

"Hey, son," boomed a never-to-be-mistaken voice; "you're out, too, aren't you?"

"Out for good, Mr. Perkins," said Freddy. "I quit last Saturday. Through with it all. It don't bother me. I ain't mixed up."

Perkins nodded, grinned, and spat into the street. So it had come.

Clay Court took the blow silently. Things were past the talking stage. There was much drinking; and Mr. Mehaffey and Mr. Sodders, reading the signs, got out their wooden shutters for their precious windows. For

the notice of the wage-cut had been followed by more sinister news. The Factory was going to operate as if nothing had happened and its freight was to be hauled as usual along the regular routes to the various depots. And the most important of these routes took the wagons down the Avenue past Clay Court.

I sought out Dicky Clews at the club that night.

“Dicky, did you personally vote in favour of the wage-cut?”

“Had to, absolutely had to, old chap. Yes,” said Dicky.

“Then, Dicky, at that moment your little soul was indicted for murder.”

“By whom, please?” said Dicky.

“God.”

CHAPTER XXV

Tuesday, August —th, — 19

NOW that the time has come to set down in material black and white the history of that day the pen hesitates and halts. But for the clippings before me I would not dare to write this chapter, for, looking back, it all seems incredible, even impossible, as impossible as a bad dream. Memory conjures up the pictures; the critical mood rejects them as chimeras.

But here are the clippings. They litter the desk. They come from all corners of the land. There are scores of them. They are the newspaper stories of what happened in Clay Court on this hot Tuesday morning in August. And the newspapers, who can go beyond!

Yes, here is the whole, stirring history as the reporters told it. There is the story of Little Joey. One special writer made a suit of clothes out of Joey. There is the story of Freddy, of Perkins; and the history of the incidents in which they were involved.

It is all there, in the screaming heads and the cold, indisputable type. There are pages of photographs, sketches, and diagrams. It was no dream. It was all real; and to those who saw it the day will linger in the mind as long as memory itself remains.

The morning opened fresh and clean. Nobody went to work; but the girl in 39 leaned on her elbows in the window and forgot to comb her hair. There was no morning clatter. So complete was the paralysis that Peace seemed to have taken up her abode in Clay Court. Children went out and called to one another in the street. It was like the morning of a Fourth of July, calm but pregnant with tumultuous possibilities.

Clay Court ate careless breakfasts and strolled out and began to drink indifferently. The men felt strange — “lost” they called it — because of the unwonted holiday, and bad liquor was called upon to bring them back to a properly self-satisfied condition. The saloon-keepers put on extra help, and the grocers marvelled that business should be so bad. In ugly crises people think of drink before food.

“Gee! Why can’t we go for a picnic!” laughed a girl.

“Stay right here, sis,” said a man. “You’ll see a picnic that’s worth the money.”

The men who heard it grinned so their teeth showed, and nodded grimly, though the lips of some were blue from funk. The rest asked only: Show us somebody to hit. The blood lust of the wronged was theirs, the primitive desire to hurt, to smash the hard-knuckled fist against a face, to grasp a throat and squeeze till the tongue came out. The passion that drove the cave man who slew a neighbour for robbing his cave, was driving them; and most of them thought no further than the savage gratification that would come from the chance to do the hated ones harm. Some of the older men shook

their heads; but it is to be feared that the young ones chortled because the strike would give a chance to fight.

“Gimme a hit at the can,” called a youth to a damsle who hurried from Sodders’s side door with a can neatly revealed under her apron.

“Kill a policeman first and I will,” was the girl’s retort. News had come that the police were guarding the Factory.

“Why don’t we go down there?” queried a boy.

“Shut up, you scut,” came the answer. “The teams are coming up this way.”

By nine Clay Court had shaken off the lethargy of a sultry morning and was warming up to the work it had in hand. As enthusiasm grew, so grew the noise. There was more laughter than any other exclamations, but the laughter was not nice to hear.

Soon men began to gather in the Hall. At nine-thirty came the inevitable meeting to consider the exciting question. “When the Wagons Pass Here What Shall We Do to Them.”

The Little Surprise Party was in full swing. The Hall was crowded. Its air, naturally fertile with odours, was swelled to bursting with the mingled lees of last night’s beer, tobacco, and whiskey, and still, considering the odour, a surprising few were seriously under the influence of liquor. But they were drunk, every mother’s son of them, drunk to the final degree of desperation on stronger waters than he found in the whiskey bottle; and their eyes, alight with the fires of revenge about to be sated, glowed livid threats to any or all who might oppose or

differ with their purpose. They talked in curses, and jostled one another indiscriminately in their gestures. The eternal savage was in the ascendant. Woe to any one or anything that offered itself as possible prey!

Such was the Hall when Ruth came in and quietly pushed her way to the front and mounted the platform. I had tried in vain to dissuade her. Her faith in her friends was boundless. I followed and mingled with these friends.

She was alone on the platform. Rinehart was not in the Hall. He had disappeared mysteriously early in the morning along with Mr. Bruggers, and had not been seen since. No one seemed to know where he had gone.

During the morning at various times speakers had mounted the platform and retired; but by now the meeting had resolved itself into a tangle on the floor in which a dozen voices spoke unanimously in favour of violence. The language was the language of hate; the uneasy, shifty movements of the crowd were those of the mob trying to find itself. Given work to do and that crowd would solidify into compact mob form. As it was, no one could say what it might do next. The indifferent observer might have compared this aimlessness with that of cattle milling around and around in a storm. On closer inspection, one might have seen by their eyes that each man was fighting with himself for the solution of an apparently insoluble problem. The mob spirit had not yet blotted out the individuals in its irresistible flood.

Ruth's appearance on the platform was like a bolt out of the sky. The loose-limbed shuffling stopped; the Hall

grew ghastly quiet, every eye and ear was riveted upon her. Only there was one sound — a terrible sound — in the room; that of a score of men panting in anger.

Ruth stood quietly near the edge of the platform, her hands folded before her. The atmosphere of the room, surcharged with hate and blackness, had made her sick at heart. She was deadly pale.

“Oh, brothers!” she cried in anguish. “What is it you mean to do?”

It was a fatal utterance. She had disagreed with them, with these men who were past the stage of listening to reason. She had, in intent, called their conduct wrong. Their breath came faster; the fire in their eyes glowed with more deadly purpose. All at once they had become her antagonists. Still they made no move. The mob spirit was mastering them slowly.

“Stop and think, friends,” begged Ruth. “Can two wrongs right one wrong? Can it do us any good to do harm because some one has harmed us? Think of what the result will be! Think of those who will suffer! Oh, brothers, you must not do this. You ——”

She got no further. Every word that she uttered had been received as exactly opposite from what she hoped and intended. She was speaking against them. And they were beyond reason.

“Aw!” roared a voice. “She’s plugging for the Comp’ny! Her and her guy are plugging for the Comp’ny!”

That was all; it was enough. The crowd had a common idea.

“Plugging for the Comp’ny! Sure!”

And in that second the crowd ceased to be.

It was a mob now. Fists went into the air shaking threateningly at the speaker.

“Don’t give us any more of that. You’re for *them*!”

The room shook with oaths and the stamping of feet. They were threatening her. Even she had lost her hold on them. They were ready to hurt her. But suddenly a boy stuck his head in the doorway.

“Hi! hi!” he screamed. “The wagons is coming; the wagons is coming!”

“Ah!” roared the mob, and started for the street.

“Wait! Please, please wait!” cried Ruth.

“Plugging for the Comp’ny!”

The mob stopped. The movement of its thoughts was like quicksilver in sand. Attention flew from the street back to Ruth. Then, unconsciously, came the question: Why go out into the street?

Why, indeed! Here it had before it an object to hate. This was what it longed for; this thirst for a quarry, for its rage was one of the parents of its being. For the moment the strike, the impending crisis, was forgotten. The mob stood still, panting. Its prey was here before it, almost within arm’s reach, so close as to offer prospect of immediate gratification of its terrible master passion. The breath of the mob grew faster, hotter. And then, like a pack of wolves suddenly swerving from the trail of a scent to the helpless doe within sight, it checked its movement toward the street. For an instant it was jammed together as two waves in the meeting; then its

course determined, it surged sidewise once, drunkenly, and came rolling back toward the platform, its front a sea of angry fists and eyes, its body a black mass of unsteady forms quivering with the terrible motion of the whole.

One man, singly and alone, going into battle, still is an individual, a human being. He retains, though unconsciously and probably unwillingly, the marks whereby his fellows have come to distinguish him from the rest of his kind, the singularities of his person and personality still are with him. The elemental passion of fight has altered, but not destroyed him.

With the mob it is a different matter. The individual is submerged, killed, in an instant. The mob spirit becomes dominant. Each man, as he comes under its sway, sheds those definitive qualities which have marked him as a distinct being, as a man, and he becomes a mere tool for the mysterious whims of the ruling spirit to mould and work at will. The crowd thus becomes no group of individuals. Each member is but an over-mastered contribution to the whole in which none retains a distinction from the rest. The mob rushing to its work is not a number of human beings on the move; it is a senseless elemental force, as raw, as primitive as the maddened stampede of cattle, as mysterious as the wail of the moon-struck wolf. The day after, men look sheepishly at one another and think: "What was it? What did it mean?" But in the minutes of action no question is asked, no reason admitted.

Ruth remained standing at the edge of the platform, her hands folded before her, as when she had begun

speaking. She did not move or speak. Her expression had in it not the slightest indication of surprise or fear. But she was very sorry.

As individuals, or under any other possible circumstance than that which now ruled and ordered it, the crowd could not have been forced to offer a threat of violence to the modest little figure that faced them so calmly. As a mob, it yelped joyfully its terrible intentions. The passion was stirred in it; before its eyes was the means of gratification; it needed but to lay hands —

“Ah! A-a-ah!”

The storm broke without ceremony. The pudgy young man directly before me had heaved the stone he was saving for the wagons, and soon after he was lying on the floor, face up, and I was leaping over him and fighting through to the platform. Some small skill in these things, developed at school and neglected afterward, returned with the speed of inspiration. The two months spent in camp were godsends. It was work that one must be in condition to do.

The suddenness and unexpectedness of it left the crowd paralyzed for an instant, and I gained the platform. It is the offensive that counts in such affairs. An aimless crowd stands dumfounded against one man with an apparently definite plan of action. The heavy table came up overhead and dropped, a splendid missile, on the heads nearest the platform, shattering the mob’s front and for a moment breaking the compactness which was the soul of its being.

I turned to the door behind us. It was locked. Two or three kicks, and my foot went through the panel, and with the hole thus made the flimsy door was easily torn to pieces. Another stone had been thrown at me, and Ruth had moved between me and the mob. When I turned she was down on her knees, coughing and pressing both hands to her breast. For a moment, at the sight of this, the yells ceased. In the lull I picked Ruth up in my arms and carried her through the floor and out of their sight, into the darkness beyond. Behind us the mob resumed its progress.

We found ourselves at the foot of a flight of stairs. At the top of these another door, unlocked. Beyond the door, the clean, welcome sunlight of broad day. The stairs led from the Hall directly to the roof.

And Ruth lay in my arms and on my breast. Her hair, golden brown in the sun, was against my throat, and one of her arms was clasped instinctively around my neck. And a summer breeze, playing vagrantly over the gravelled house tops, lifted a wisp of hair and brushed it against my lips.

“Are you hurt? Oh! are you hurt?”

She shook her head, but she did not move, nor did she remove her arm.

“I don’t think I am hurt at all. I am all right.”

“Why did you move down there? Why didn’t you stand still? That stone was not meant for you.”

But she made no answer. I held her more tightly. And now I knew that after this I never could let her go, and our paths must be one. For so it was written. And

I knew what the troubled world needed: it was Love. I placed her feet upon the gravel, still holding her lest she fall. She turned away for a moment, and when she turned back she was buttoning her waist.

"It was all right," she said smiling. "It is nothing."

"Are you sure, Ruth? Quick! They may be up soon."

Her slow, patient smile lit up her face, and she shook her head slowly.

"No, I don't think so," she said. "I don't believe they will follow us. They were not themselves down there, they were not responsible. They did not know what they were doing. They lost all control and reason for that awful minute. It wasn't any more, you know; just a flash. It will be all over by this time, and they will be themselves again. Listen! They're not coming, are they?"

I threw myself back to the door and peered down the stairs. I could see nothing, but on the floor below was the shuffle and thud of rapidly moving feet. Loud voices, some hoarse, some strident under the sway of anger, came indistinctly up the stairway. I heard the rattle of the table violently overthrown. An instant latter came a roar that shook the building, a new, terrible, single-tongue shriek of the mob that made child's play of all that had gone before. Then the sound of the footsteps grew fainter and died away, and I turned back to Ruth.

"Evidently they've changed their minds," I said.

"They have gone into the street," said Ruth. "They have gone. I did nothing. I did not reach them. I

could not make them see. Oh! how helpless and useless I am. Some one else in my place could have saved them from this terrible mistake."

"No one on earth could have done it. They were mad. Ah! There they go."

Up from the street there came that cry which men dread to dream of once they have heard it and seen what follows — the cry of a mob beginning its work. We ran forward to the front of the building. Below us the crowd was filling the Court to choking, and out on the Avenue the first of the Company's wagons was making its appearance.

CHAPTER XXVI

OF ALL the bad scenes that have fallen to the lot of Clay Court what followed was the worst—the most harmful. The hurt of it is there and elsewhere to this day. For war leaves its terrible after-scars no less in the secret hearts of people than on the face of earth, and this was war as it was in the beginning, primitive, food-need strife.

To make it all clear to the reader, let him fancy the Avenue, as a great, straight river, with Clay Court emptying into it like a short, straight slip. To the little building-locked Court the great wide thoroughfare spelled the great wide world, and now it proceeded to turn the world into a fiery little hell.

Since morning the street had been electric with the atmosphere of impending crisis. Small boys had been fighting intermittently, restlessly anticipating the grim scenes which their elders soon were to portray. They varied their squabbling with sudden and undirected duty as scouts, dashing out into the big Avenue and spurting south toward the silent, police-guarded, teaming yards. Skinny Wernicky had won an hour's fervid fame by penetrating to the police circle and bringing fleetly back the news that the wagons were getting ready. Scuff McHealy went him one better a little later by getting

arrested at the factory door. Skinny grew fiercely jealous when he heard the news.

The activities of the boys were indications of what was passing in the minds of the men. Around the saloon they had gathered at an early hour, deserting it only for the richer meat of the final meeting. Yet it was not a liquor-maddened crowd that now filled the street. Their drunkenness was madder and deeper, founded on fiercer material and spurred by fiercer devils than dwell in whiskey. They were drunk, terribly drunk, with the mob spirit, and rumbling steadily as the clouds about to hurl a storm.

All morning they had rumbled, recited over and over again to one another, between set teeth, the tale of their wrongs, cursing all order, and swearing with fierce joy over the prospect of revenge. A holiday spirit seemed to actuate most of them. For once they had renounced the rules and bonds that bound them. No longer were they heavily servile and sullen as had been their wont. They were free. They had cast off the sense of obedience to the prevailing order of things. They were going to upset them — overthrow them. Those wagons of the Factory Company were symbolic of all that they had feared and hated. As they were overthrown, so would the things they stood for be overthrown. It was revolt, it was revolution!

Men laughed in harsh fashion and pushed their shirt sleeves up on hairy forearms with excited hands. They jostled one another on the narrow walk, overflowed into the street; and the younger did jig steps among the

rotting paving blocks, while the terrible mob poured pell-mell out of the hall into the street.

For a moment the narrow place boiled with disorder. So suddenly had the word come, that women were nursing babes on the doorstep when the first blow was struck. Two things happened of similar impressiveness: the men lurched toward the Avenue with instinctive fierceness, and out of every doorway came a woman who drove into the crowd, captured one or two excited children, and dragged them bawling to the shelter of in-doors.

One pursued her offspring into a saloon, whither he fled to escape maternal wrath. Another picked her latest infant from the curb, bore it in-doors and calmly seated herself at a window to give it breast.

A girl folded her arms on a window ledge and called to some one in the crowd: "Won't it be awful fer you tuh get that purty face cracked!"

"Gowan, I'll come back an' hit yer a slap in the face when I'm through," retorted the object of scorn.

"Dinny!" called an old woman peering into a hallway. "Dinny, where be ye, scut, whin all the fun's a-goin' on?"

"Gettun' meh tools," retorted Dinny, appearing with a flat-iron in each hand.

"Ee-you-now!" screamed the crowd. "There they are. Come on, *boys!*"

Upon a window cornice a mother sparrow chirped shrilly, warning a half-grown young one. She did not know what was going on, but she felt the brewing of an ugly storm.

The wagons came on. Slowly, ponderously, two great bay horses drew into sight, noble beasts, ramping with good feeding, shiny from care, and excited to the prancing stage by the noise and motion about them. Their thick, strong necks bent in graceful arches as they answered the taut-held rein; the foam flew from their mouths, flecking their shiny collars, and one could see the big veins beneath the tight skin. They were beautiful — the only object the eye might find that merited this description — and the load that they drew was play for them. The wagon swayed and jerked as they danced in their impatience.

Upon the driver's seat sat a white thin-faced man with a soft hat pulled down over his eyes. He looked neither to right nor left; his eyes never left the backs of the animals he was guiding. Beside him was a police officer, his coat thrown open and a soft black tie flapping on a white plaited shirt front. The officer sat with his left hand on his hip, his right resting loosely on his knee. His little deep-sunk eyes ran from one side to the other with a regularity that was almost mechanical; and at times his left hand tugged nervously at his loosened collar. The driver had eyes only for his horses.

Such was the picture as the first wagon rolled out into plain sight of all who were in Clay Court at the time.

Then things happened with a swiftness that taxed the eye to follow. Out from a doorway on the Avenue flew a lithe, athletic figure with something brassy shining on his clinched knuckles. Like the flash of a mad acrobat he seemed to fly from the curb to a front hub, then up on

to the seat and into a grapple with the policeman. Once, twice, the brass knuckles flashed in the sun. At the first blow the officer's helmet flew from his head, at the second he became a huddled lump on the seat. From somewhere in Clay Court came at the same time the counterpart of the officer's assailant, another thin, wiry young man, who throttled the driver before his hand could reach the revolver in his covered pocket.

Then the flood broke. Clay Court, like a pent-up stream, broke loose and poured itself out on to the wagon. Every doorway became a volcano spouting human beings, every being shrieked at the top of his voice. Knives flashed. The taut traces were cut, snapping at the slash, like straining hawsers, and the two great horses, suddenly freed, reared, leaped sideways once, and went at a maddened gallop down the Avenue.

The crowd roared. Two score hands found hold on one side of the wagon. Another roar. The heavy vehicle rose swiftly, balanced for an instant on two wheels, then toppled upside down with a crash.

“Oil! Oil! Get some oil!”

“Eyah! Burn the wagon! Kill 'em!”

The officer lay where he had fallen near the curb. The driver, white and silent, was fighting near him with a skill that explained his choice for the post of danger. He was a wild-cat who knew the value of straight punching. His fists flashed out straight from the shoulders like twin bullets of flesh and bone, and two men went down like hammered cattle, ere one dove in and got a body hold. Then some one struck from behind and the

driver stretched face down on the pavement. There was a red smudge where his white face met the mud, and then the officers from the other wagon charged, and the war was on.

The mouth of Clay Court suddenly became a battle field. Here the mob took its stand, here the officers pounded savagely, and here a fight took place that the police tell of to this day.

The front of the mob fought back in almost solid order. From the rear cobble stones fell on the officers' heads, and a fusillade of the same from roofs and windows bore testimony to much thoughtful preparation.

The officers were stopped. In the hand-to-hand fighting, the mob was handing back as good as it received. Enraged beyond all reason or order, the officers ceased for the while to be machines of authority and became mere maddened individuals, fighting to maim and disable assailants who were hurting them. The clubs rose and fell as they closed. Officer and mobsman clutched at each other's throats and fell rolling in the mud, fighting for a hickory stick with a fierceness as if for life itself. He who went down underneath was the fortunate one, for the uppermost at once became a target for heavy kicks.

Soon the officers were on the defensive. They were out-numbered and out-fought. A moment later they were beaten—licked. The mob triumphed for the nonce. Helmetless, their uniforms torn and faces bloody, the squad drew back into the Avenue. A fresh attack sent them on the run back to the line of stalled wagons.

There they drew up panting, awaiting reinforcements, and the mob howled gleefully and improved its moment of triumph by firing the overturned wagon.

Up Avenue rang the clang of patrol wagons. One, two, three, four, of them. On the gallop they came and poured their loads into the midst of the defeated squad, while the mob scrambled busily for new weapons, and part of it, with a generalship that seemed too calm for that hot-blooded hour, drew the burning wagon squarely across the mouth of Clay Court. It lay there blazing, a barrier which the police must pass around.

Out in the Avenue order was emerging from chaos. An inspector was in command. He placed himself in the front. The officers formed behind in two firm lines.

“Drive them back first and let the wagons pass,” said the inspector.

“Stick!” roared the mob defiantly.

The inspector was a police machine. His uniform was new, the velvet on the collar bright and high. His moustache was curled, his hands empty. A yard in front of his men he marched, his head as high, his step as jaunty as when he led his squad in a holiday parade. He was impressive, but the mob laughed.

Ten feet from the wagon his trained eye, moving high and low, caught sight of something that sputtered like a lighted fire-cracker on the ledge of an upper window of the corner building, and he smiled up at the window contemptuously.

“Halt,” he said in a low voice. Even as he spoke a yellow arm thrust itself out of the window, picked

up the sputtering thing and hurled it down at the police lines.

It looked like a black bottle with a burning wick in the neck as it fell. It struck squarely on the burning wagon. A flash, a roar, a shaking of pavement, buildings and windows, a jarring of ear drums as if the earth had been struck a mighty blow. A great puff of smoke. Then the clear street again. The debonair inspector was raising himself from the ground. The wagon was gone. Scraps of it lay scattered everywhere. The bomb, miserably aimed, had blown away the barricade and harmed not a living soul.

The inspector brushed mud from his cap.

“Never mind him,” he said, looking up at the window. “We’ll get him any time. Name’s Rinehart. Now, drive ‘em back, with no more nonsense and let the wagons pass.”

Then boomed a voice from the other side. “Yes. Drive them back. Come and see what you’re a-drivin’ back.”

CHAPTER XXVII

THE man who had shouted broke through and leaped out before the advancing squad. It was Perkins.

He had taken no part in the morning's disturbances. He had not been in the Hall, had had no share in the talking and drinking that preceded it. All morning he had sat in a rocking-chair in his front room, sullenly repelling all attempts at conversation and alternating his study of the bare floor with a careful inspection of the "enlarged photo" of a young man in a foot-soldier's uniform that hung on the wall. The picture was supposed to resemble Perkins's father as he was some time in 1863. Above the picture usually there hung a straggly piece of a flag. It was gone now, and Perkins sat stolidly in the rocker and looked from floor to picture, from picture to floor, with the air of a man who was waiting for something of some importance.

He had not drunk a drop; his pipe had remained unlighted. Between his knees his great hairy hands were folded carefully; and he had taken particular care to see that he was as well dressed and as clean as was possible for him then and there. Outside buzzed the hot-blooded talk; high, angry words floated in through the windows; and the steps of hurried feet upon the stairs of the Hall

always were to be heard. The climax of the meeting had sent forth a roar that shook the windows. But Perkins had sat and rocked, and rocked, and looked at the floor and the picture. None of it touched him or heated his blood to the temperature that kills reason. He was of a breed that has learned to think and think alone, and still acts hotly.

When the first swelling roar told that the wagons were in sight, he rose slowly stretching himself to his full, loose height, and tested each joint and muscle with a great raising of arms and legs. Another roar, and pushing back his sleeves like a man going to work he started for the door. As he passed it he smiled bitterly at the picture on the wall. Then he went out in the street, coolly shouldered men out of his way, and stepped forth alone at the crucial moment. The missing flag was tied in a sash around his waist.

A yard to the fore of the mob he stopped with the air of one who is going to stay.

“Get back, get back there!” commanded an officer.

Perkins answered not a word. Like a man of stone he awaited the shock, head thrust forward, sharp eyes peering fiercely beneath ragged brows, arms rigid and held far away from the body, legs far apart and stiff at the knees. In his eyes shone the light that came from the heart of him, the heart of the breed that cannot go back once it has decided to stay.

“Get back!”

A waste of words. Like throwing water against a stone!

“Come on, ye big bluffer!”

The officer was a scant six feet away. Here, too, was a giant, one in brass buttons and with a club in his hand. He was as tall as Perkins, and heavier, for he was built and fed like a prize bull, and under his helmet flamed the red badge of his kind. He was a good fighting machine, bred for the work, picked, trained, and experienced in a harsh, rough school. But never had he met such a man as Perkins.

“Get back!”

The officer waved his club like a long, wagging finger. Still Perkins did not move, did not speak.

The officer paused. And for a moment they stood face to face, eying one another with that comprehensive toe-to-skull glance with which fighting men compliment one another. Then the officer drove forward, his left hand reaching for a throat hold and the club swinging wildly, and Perkins hit him between the eyes and dropped him in his tracks.

A breeze sprang up and for an instant the flag at his waist flapped briskly.

The attention of the mob and the officers now focussed on the new champion.

“Go to 'em, old man!” shrieked the mob. “Knock their blocks off!”

“Get that man,” ordered the inspector. “Get that crazy man first of all.”

Then the fight swirled around Perkins like a whirlpool around a rock. Like a rock he stood, firm-planted, erect and defiant. He made a pile of blue before him

four deep. He laughed when they broke his nose; he bellowed when his fist found an eye.

It was too fine, too grand to last. A club fell from behind and Perkins staggered under the blow. He fastened two hands like clamps on an officer's throat. Another blow, then another. Perkins let go his hold and went down under a mountain of blue and brass, and an officer tore the crazy sash from his waist as he fell.

"Nuts. Plain nuts," said the inspector. "The bug-house for him. Now get the rest; get 'em right."

But the sight of Perkins being dragged away with his head rolling limply had driven the iron into the mob's soul. The die had been cast. The war was on to a finish. Those police uniforms no longer stood for authority, but as the insignia of an enemy with which to fight. Order had been overthrown; the mob was not afraid of the brass buttons.

The determined charge of the officers fizzled out. Their lines were broken, their strength as a body scattered. They became merely a number of individuals struggling with twice their number. The gallant inspector had lost his cap.

"By golly, this is something new."

The inspector drew his revolver.

"They need strong medicine," said he.

The officers followed his example.

"More than you can give us," cried the mob.

The inspector fired into the air. The mob laughed.

"That's serious," said the inspector.

A shot from the rear of the mob answered him. Three

or more followed it. An officer grunted and sat down with his hands to his middle.

“That’s hell,” said the inspector. He stepped forward.

“I order you to disperse,” said he.

“The hell you say!” laughed the mob.

And then the police fired.

CHAPTER XXVIII

GEE!" said Little Joey, sitting upright as the bomb shook the Tenement. "What an awful noise!" His bed leapt an inch from the floor, rattled and grew still.

"I wonder what that could 'a' been?" said Joey.

He was feeling quite well by this time, was Joey, although he was very weak. He wanted very much to get out and see what the excitement was about. Sitting up in bed, however, was as far as the doctor would let him go in his present condition. He was all right, he told himself, but he had to stay there in bed, just the same. It made him petulant. He strained his eyes to hear something that would tell the nature of the explosion, but nothing offering, he flung himself back on the pillows, muttering because he was not in it.

"Gawd! Oh, my Gawd!"

Joey sat up again. The voice, like a groan, was outside his door.

"What you want?" demanded Joey.

The door swung open and closed again, and Mr. Bruggers, Joey's father, stood in the room.

"Hide me, Joey, hide me!" cried the man in a whisper.
"Hide me, Joey. Don't let 'em get me."

Mr. Bruggers's fingers were playing with the buttons

on his coat. He was the colour of a spoiled oyster. His eyes seemed ready to pop from their sockets.

“What’s the matter with you?” growled Joey.

“Don’t!” cried Mr. Bruggers. “Joey! Joey, my only boy! Don’t throw your poor old dad down like that. Hide me, Joey. Help me make my get away. Rinehart made his all right. He’s the one who’s all to blame for it. He promised me two dollars. He only gave me one. Then he—he did it, Joey; I didn’t. I swear I didn’t, swear before Gawd, I didn’t. Rinehart, he says: ‘Now, both together,’ but he’d only gimme one dollar. ‘Gimme the other dollar,’ I sez, ‘or I don’t throw.’ And I didn’t, Joey, I’ll swear on the stand I didn’t, I —”

“Aw, what yeh talking about?” cried Joey. “What’d yeh do?”

“Nothing, Joey, I swear I didn’t do nothing. ‘Both together,’ sez Rinehart. But he’d only paid me half of what he promised. So I didn’t throw mine. He was the one who did it, he—he was the only one that threw.”

“Threw what?”

“The bomb. I—I —”

“Gee!” said Joey. “Was that what it was?”

“Yes, yes. Rinehart, he threw it. Boom! it went. I didn’t throw. He’d only paid me half. Then he ducked. I went after him—without throwing. ‘Gimme the other dollar!’ sez I. ‘Go to hell,’ sez he. I follered him, Joey, without throwing. He went up a ladder to the roof. I went after him. ‘Gimme the other dollar,’ sez I, and he slams the trap-door down on my fingers.

See my fingers, Joey. Smashed your poor old dad's fingers. I — ”

Somebody shouted in the stairway.

“Hide me, Joey. Don’t tell ’em I’m here, Joey; your old dad, you know!” and Mr. Bruggers with an unprintable shriek dove to the floor and crawled under Joey’s bed.

“Go wan,” said Joey. “They ain’t nobody coming up here.”

“Oh, yes, they are, Joey,” wailed Mr. Bruggers through the mattress! “Yes, they are, Joey. They’re after me. They’re trying to get me. They’ll jail your poor old daddy, Joey, and it wasn’t me — it wasn’t me, at all.”

“Aw, what yeh talking ’bout?” said Joey.

“He killed people, Joey.”

“Huh?”

“No, there wasn’t — It didn’t hurt anybody, did it, Joey? It was only a little one, Gawd! what a noise it made. Boom! I can hear it now. Joey! Joey! Did you hear was anybody — anybody — hurt? Hah? Did you hear?”

“Aw,” said Joey, “I dunno what you’re talking ’bout. How can I know?”

All the time that this conversation was going on, Joey had been trembling all over, as if he were horribly frightened, although he was far from being afraid of his father in that gentleman’s present condition. The tears were running down Joey’s face, bitter tears such as he never had shed before. Why he was afraid, or why he cried, it is very probable that he did not know. (Bruggers

afterward testified that the little fellow was trembling and crying, although at the time he admitted he took no notice of it.) Bruggers, too, was crying. Under the bed he gave way to great, hulking sobs, sobs that shook the floor and cut little Joey to the heart.

"Pa!" cried the little fellow in anguish. "Don't cry, don't cry, pa. There ain't nothing wrong, is there?"

Still Bruggers sobbed, and still the bed shook.

"What is it, pa?" sobbed Joey, leaning over and looking for his parent. "Don't cry, pa. There ain't nobody after you. No, there ain't. Sure."

"Oh, yes, there is, Joey; yes, there is. They're after me, Joey; they're after me."

"Naw! Naw, they ain't, pa. Honest, pa, honest. You're all right. Please don't cry, pa; please don't. You're all right, pa; sure, you're all right."

"Aw, Joey!" Bruggers's wailing ceased abruptly. "Joey, you're a good boy to your poor, old pa. You always was good."

"That's all right, pa," said Joey. "Don't cry."

"You was always good to me, Joey. You're a good son, Joey. I don't know what we'd 'a'done without you. And you're getting all right now, ain't you, Joey?"

"Sure."

"Getting well, ain't you, Joey?"

"Sure."

"Strong?" Mr. Bruggers's voice was calm, calm and eager.

"Sure."

“Joey.” Mr. Bruggers mellowed his tone to his most honeyed expression.

“What is it, dad?”

“Joey.”

“Hah?”

“You think — you think you could get up? Just for a minute, Joey, just for a minute?”

“Why? Why?”

“Cause they’re after me, Joey, they’re after me. I didn’t do it, though. Rinehart, he threw it. Joey, please, Joey, run down and see if any one was killed. Will you, Joey? Will you, please, for your poor old dad. I’m gone, Joey, if —”

“Sure!” said Joey throwing off the covers. “Sure, I will, pa.”

His father’s condition had disturbed him. The blood was pumping into his head at a rate that made him dizzy. He slid off the side of the bed and was surprised to find how easy walking was for him. He seemed to float along the floor.

“Sure, I’ll go and see, pa,” he said. “Don’t be ’fraid, pa. You’re all right.”

“Good boy, Joey,” sobbed Bruggers. “Hurry back.”

And the police fired!

Joey had paddled down the stairs and was in the Tenement doorway at that moment. He had stopped, bewildered and shocked motionless by the scene before him. Then came the volley.

The effect of such a volley on a tightly packed crowd is to be likened only to that of an explosion. One instant

the mob presents the appearance of a solid; the next it is torn and shattered as if smitten by a single, devastating force. There is a lull, a moment of stupefied silence. The crowd, which a second before pressed jeeringly toward the little revolvers, is aghast. An expression of incredulity goes over its face; it stands numbed, speechless, gasping at the fulfilment of the threat it has laughed at. Then it breaks forth suddenly into murderous, suicidal rage, or flees abjectly according to the nature of the individuals composing it.

So had the crowd in Clay Cour. jeered, and so it grew still as the revolvers answered. It drew back, pressing closely against the walls, into doorways and hallways, seeking to remove itself from the unbelievable horror that it had seen created. The street itself was empty — except for three men. Two of these lay where they had fallen. The other was Dinny Noonan. Somehow Dinny had managed to get a bullet in his worthless carcass, and it was troubling him sorely. He lay on all-fours near the curb before the Tenement and strove to get on his feet. He rose a little, fell heavily, rose and again fell. He fell toward the curb; he was trying to get away from the solid blue line behind him. The line stood with revolvers ready; the crowd let Dinny struggle while it drew away in terror from those menacing muzzles.

Then occurred that which Clay Court for long after was prone to believe an apparition; Little Joey, very thin and small in his night-gown, pale, tousled-haired, and strangely clean, came running out of the Tenement into

the cleared street, calling in his clear child's voice, "I'll help you, Dinny; I'll help you," and taking one of Dinny's arms he tried to lift him to his feet. It was much too much for him, and he began to sob bitterly, tugging at the shot-numbed body and all the time repeating: "I'll help you, Dinny; I'll help you." As Dinny's haunches sagged helplessly to the ground, Joey threw both arms around his neck and wailed: "Oh, Dinny, Dinny! Please don't, Dinny, please!"

He was the centre of the scene. They watched him in awe and without a word, officers and mobmen. It was so still that every word he spoke was heard by all.

"Mother of Christ!" murmured an officer and threw his weapon on the ground. "The saints forgive us."

He ran forward with empty hands, for he had children of his own, this man.

"He's all right, little boy," he said huskily. "He's all right."

He swept Joey up with one arm and ran on into the Tenement hallway.

"In with you!" he cried, setting the boy down. "Inside with you — and stay in."

Then he turned to do battle with the crowd that waylaid him at the door.

But Joey had given the inspector his opportunity. The mob was broken. More officers had unloaded in the Avenue.

"Clear the street. Every officer make an arrest."

It was easy now. The mob-spirit was gone. The crowd was merely a number of ill-fed individuals. They

ran like sheep and fought half-heartedly when captured. An officer would single out his man, leap upon him from behind, bear him down, overpower him and drag him out to the line of patrol wagons on the Avenue. The thing worked by system. As a wagon was filled the door was slammed and the load sent away at the trot. One ~~afte~~ another they went. There were dead men, wounded men, captured men. The wagons carted them all away, and presently, as a reporter wrote that evening, "little remains save broken windows, shattered doors, bullet marks on buildings, bespattered walks, and the hole in the street where the bomb exploded, to indicate the fierceness of the riot. A squad of officers under Inspector Donahey is stationed upon the scene. Curious crowds already are trying to obtain bits of the burnt wagon as souvenirs. The officers at times are forced to use strenuous methods in controlling the throng of sightseers."

Little remains! Wonderful words! But what little there was rankles in the hearts of Clay Court to this day; yes, will rankle even unto the next generation.

Tuesday, August —, 19 —. The big day had come. The struggle had passed. Little remains — but for Clay Court to hunt new work in the morning.

CHAPTER XXIX

TUESDAY, also, we must remember, was the day that Freddy had planned to go downtown for his fiddlestrings. He went in the morning, for Della and he had planned a wonderful car ride into the country in the afternoon.

“We can just get on a car and ride, and keep on riding, and get off and pick the tall grass, and stay as long as we please without caring whether the whistle blows or not,” he explained as they drew their plans.

“Hurry back,” she said as she kissed him farewell before starting down town. “I’ll be nervous till you’re here.”

It was when the crowd was beginning to flock toward the Hall.

“This thing’s got me leery,” said Della. “Let’s blow it as quick as we can. It’s — it’s no place for us.” Her eyes ran nervously over the angry men, and something was in her heart which neither her tongue nor her eyes could tell. And Freddy had nought to do with the disturbance.

“No place at all, yer leddyship,” agreed Freddy. “I’ll hike for the strings, and a box of gumdrops, then you and me for the close-to-nature stunts. S’long.”

The young part that way in Clay Court. Hearts swell

or break; life opens up in a vista of hope or shuts down with the clap of doom; the one concerned shrugs his shoulder, makes a grimace, and searches his soul for something flippant and smart to say to pass the thing over.

"S'long," said Della, though she was ice cold all over.

"Hah?" said Freddy turning. Her face was like a mask.

"Nothing. Go on with you." He kissed her again. Then he swung away.

Della remembered that kiss. It was the last time that Freddy kissed her.

It took Freddy much longer to get the fiddlestrings than he had expected. The old German from whom he purchased his supplies was inquisitive. Why new strings now? Furthermore, he had a new violin in stock — a worthy instrument. He placed it in Freddy's hands. Freddy picked at it, he placed it against his cheek, and he played, and played, and the minutes slipped by. But the old German stood and stared at him with stiff, disappointed eyes.

"Nein!" he exploded. "Dere iss someding wrong. Id iss nod deh violin? No? Den you are in trouble? Yess?"

Freddy shook his head, smilingly, and played on, with his thoughts on Della.

"Nah!" The old man took back the beloved violin and bow with a jerk. "Marry her den. Gedt id off your mind, my boy. Den perhaps you play as once you did. Bud now — woman — woman — woman; id is all

dat is in your soul; and det violin — like a dog you treat id. So!"

"Right you are, old Smearcase," laughed Freddy, gaily. "And I got a date that'll be late now. S'long, Dutch."

Then at last Freddy hurried, but no man born of woman can hurry fast enough to overtake the machinations of Fate, and Freddy reached Clay Court at the moment when the charging police first drove back the crowd.

He was chagrined. Here his way was blocked and he would have to wait until the place was cleared until he could see Della. For he had no desire or intention to engage in the struggle. To wait while the battle raged he stepped into a sheltering hallway. Fatal hallway. On the lower steps sat half a dozen young men, their tense, expectant attitudes proving that they were waiting. One of the foremost chewed gum with passionate energy. He was white of face, and his eyes burned with the flame of Fear. But he was the leader.

"H'lo, Freddy!" he greeted. Freddy's entrance served to relieve the tension. "You waiting for a good chance to slough some one, too?"

"Hah?" Freddy's eyes opened in surprise.

"D'you come in here to lay for 'em?"

"Is that what you're doing here?" said Freddy.

"Sure thing. Wait until you see what comes off."

"Here —! I don't want to get mixed up in any trouble."

"You don't what?"

"No police scrappin' for me. I'm out of it. Nix on that for me."

"You are like h—l out of it! Well, I should say not! What yer goin' to do — stool pigeon for the cops? Hah?"

"Ain't going to do anything. Keep out of it. Mind my own business. See!"

"You are like h—l going to mind your own business. You're in this, too. We're all in it, and you're no better'n the rest."

"I ain't." Freddy retreated to the walk. "I'm going to keep my mitts clean in this, I tell you."

"You're against us then, eh? If you ain't with us, you're against us."

Freddy now was in the street. Suddenly he was caught first in the surging crowd, which, shifting its base, was wedged tightly against the walls. He was bewildered. He wanted to get away. He struggled against the throng. He was one in a hundred. The mob whipped him off his feet, milled him around, and held him prisoner, a part of itself. Fight as he would he was helpless. And now to his horror he saw that the mob had turned. The officers had drawn back. The mob with exultant yelps moved forward. He was carried along, against the officers.

In a frenzy he threw both arms around a trolley post and sought to remain. As well grasp a slippery rock in the heart of a merciless rapid. The crowd pressed on, tore him from his moorings with its pressure, and bore him along.

He fought to get away. It was impossible. He saw the officers; he wanted to scream and run to them for protection. One of them dove forward and broke through

the front ranks of the mob straight at him. Something hit him on the head. It was minutes before he remembered what came next and then he found himself standing upright, swearing with a brick in his hand. He looked at it curiously for he had no recollection of how it came to be there. He had seen the others stop and arm themselves. He had no recollection of yielding to dominance of the mob and of doing the same thing. He tasted something salty and realized that he was bleeding.

An officer knocked down the two men before him, and swung his club high for a third blow. Freddy smashed the brick into his face exactly like the others. The officer dodged but not enough. The blood squirted from a long cut in his cheek. Then Freddy's fist was in his eye; the officer's hand was at Freddy's throat; and locked together, straining, cursing, slipping, striking; they went down, arose, went down, and arose again. Then the officer, clubless, helmetless, badly beaten, covered his head with his arms and ran back and Freddy was left alone, blood on his lips, his nostrils distended and the club in his hands.

“Throw the boots into 'em!” he cried, and in a moment he was swallowed up and became only a howling, fighting cog in a howling, fighting mob, and the mob moved forward. So it happened that Della and the car ride were quite forgotten.

When Freddy came to he was staggering and two officers were holding him with firm hands. Two other young men from Clay Court — two of those who had stood in the hallway — similarly staggering and

bleeding, and similarly held, stood beside him. Freddy heard one of the officers speaking.

"They say he's dead; he died in the wagon."

"Ah, ha!" said another. "That'll mean that these young — will learn what it means to kill a policeman."

Freddy looked at him dully. Things were rather indistinct. He fancied it was like being drunk.

"You ain't talking at me, are you?" he asked.

The officer thrust his face close to Freddy's eyes.

"You —!" he hissed. "You know you're in it up to your neck."

"Talking to me?" repeated Freddy.

"Don't stall me," retorted the officer, "you're in it right."

"In it?" said Freddy, uncomprehending. "In what?"

"The killing, you young —!"

Then the meaning of the scene seeped into Freddy's club-fuddled brain.

"You — you don't mean that — to me — do you?" he whispered. "Man — officer — I — I wasn't in it. I didn't want to be in it. Before God, I was just going home — and — I — I — my God — I —"

"Shut up," said the officer. "Here comes the wagon."

Della had not seen the riot. Things of this sort she heartily disliked, especially now that she was "free." They were unpleasant, and disturbing. She remained in-doors; she wasn't interested. Freddy, she knew, was down town and safe. He had, of course, seen the riot, and turned back. That was all right. He would come when things had quieted down; yes, he would come,

sure. And it must be confessed that Della at that time didn't care greatly what happened to any one so long as Freddy would come for her when things had quieted down.

She grew apprehensive when the riot died down and he didn't come. She waited nervously awhile, listened impatiently to the details of the fight, to the tales of dead and wounded, and eventually she went out into the Avenue, bareheaded and alone.

A boy came running to her with a paper. "They pinched Freddy," he announced. Della took the paper and read. The full details of Freddy's arrest were there, supplemented by the news that he had helped kill Officer McGeoghan.

"No," said Della, "that isn't Freddy; not Freddy."

But she read again and saw that it was. Still she continued to look at the paper, without indicating that the type carried any significance for her.

"Tain't Freddy," she repeated shaking her head easily. "No, it ain't Freddy."

And then like a rush of blood her mind came back to her from the blackness whither the blow had driven it, and she cried out aloud as only women cry when their mate is taken from them.

"Tain't Freddy!" she screamed, throwing the paper into the boy's face. "You lie! You lie! 'Tain't my Freddy!"

She turned and went down the Avenue, bareheaded, alone, her dress open at the throat, her arms rigid, her fists clinched at her sides. She held her head up high

and breathed through her mouth, and people stepped out of her way and looked after her when she had passed.

She went to the police station, now a black inferno of heated stone and iron filled to suffocation with one hundred sweating, clamouring prisoners, and lorded over by officers whose menacing eyes reeked hatred for all who had shared in the day's bad work. Della asked for Freddy. A young officer insulted her casually and grossly with a question, and several others laughed at his sally.

"You go get you another guy, sis," advised one of them. "This one's been copped away from you; going to marry another dame."

"Marry another! Who?" said Della.

"Miss Joliet for about thirty years, and no divorce goes. He's done for, your guy, sis; we got the goods on him."

"My God!" said the girl foolishly. "Poor Freddy!"

She asked to see him.

"Nah, you can't see 'im," said another officer. "And what's more, you'd better chase yourself out o' here. You're pretty lucky not to be down there yourself."

"He ain't nice to look at, either," said one. Whereat they all laughed.

Della went out, walking like one in her sleep, her wide-open eyes staring straight before her, seeing nothing, comprehending nothing, paralyzed with an unknown, unspeakable fright. What did they mean? What had happened to Freddy? What might happen to her? The fear and dread with which the helpless regard society's

machinery of regulation, the police, was rooted deep in Della's heart now. She had touched the dark shades of a great horror bred in her from the days of the first parental admonition: "Look out; here comes a policeman." The dread of the Law! To Della the Law stood for Punishment — only Punishment. Its hand was the hand of doom. And it had fallen on Freddy; and the impression on Della was that of having sniffed the air of the dark, dread tomb in which a heart's brother is sepulchred. But Freddy was alive.

That was the bitterest part of it — the unhuman, supernatural tang. Death held no terror like this. He remained in the world of the living, yet he was not of it. And their separation was as permanent, as effectual as as if the clouds had rattled above his head.

"He's gone," ran Della's thoughts. "He's gone." That, and nothing more. And Hope, that blessed saviour which had sprung into being with the coming of their love, and their planning, and their opportunity, was dead. One instant the murky clouds of Fate had lifted; the heavens glimmered bright and beautiful beyond. One instant; then the night.

Della stood on the stone step of the station house dazed, half-killed. A cell door clanged shut. A lock turned groaningly. Then, silence. Yes, it was very like a tomb. And Freddy was in there, alive, but gone.

"Come on." A rough voice behind her, a rough hand slamming the door. Della turned around. The door was black and tightly shut.

"Oh!" said Della. "Oh! Poor Freddy!"

Down the dark steps, into the dark, hollow street before the station, still in the unspeakable horror-driven daze. Her steps on the stones rang echoingly in the emptiness of the place. She was afraid of them. They revealed her presence to those — the terrible figures — who kept the tomb. She felt the grasp of the black iron, the gray stone upon her. She hurried, frantically running away from the place, though the noise of her steps was terrifying. The smell of the station was in her nostrils; the threat of it in her soul. Overhead a blood-red moon, thin as a wafer, looked down through the grime at the dark-doomed district like an evil eye.

“Oh!” moaned Della. “Oh, poor Freddy!”

And she hurried on.

Through dark, hopeless streets, streets of factories, dead after nightfall, gutted of lights and all things living, charnel-houses of industry, lay her course. There were lights at the corners, sickly pale wisps of burning gas struggling behind dirty glass. Between them, there was darkness, unrelieved save for the occasional gleam of a watchman’s lantern. She came to the railroad yards, and the taste of soot on her tongue told her that she was panting, open-mouthed. A freight train clanged, the bells rang a warning; and she ran across the tracks, her hands on her bosom.

Her hair slipped down from the back of her head. More dark streets. Oh, how dark, how hopeless, how damning they were! It seemed that the Horror had laid its hand upon them, and they were doomed. And how helpless — how hopelessly helpless — one little girl was

against them. Though she had played in these same streets at night in the short playing years of her childhood, Della, now, with years and a woman's experience behind her, was afraid. Never had she feared them before; but never before had she felt their crushing significance. The lights and the crowds of the Avenue in the distance. Della hurried to them as a terrified child hurries to the shelter of a mother's arms. Into the thoroughfare she hurled herself, gulping with joy as the rough crowd jostled her in its motion. Lights in her eyes, the sound of voices, common chattering voices, in her ears, elbows in her sides. Ah! it was good, good to be saved! For this was the thought in the fleeing girl's mind as she lost herself in the throng; saved, saved, saved! She was back in the world again, the frivolous, gabbling world where she belonged, where all living people belonged; and the tomb — ah! the tomb couldn't reach her here in the sea-like souse of swarms of people 'neath the bright, shiny lights. She was safe. But Freddy, Freddy, was back there. Freddy was gone.

Off the Avenue in Clay Court, Della recoiled. Darkness here, too; the hand of doom. She rushed in-doors and lighted the gas and turned it on to the limit. She must have light. She would fear the dark for the rest of her days. Then she sat down.

She had not cried. Her eyes were dry. But there was no light in them, and no life, such as had gleamed in them and softened them with the coming of love. There was no buoyancy or hope. She had grown old suddenly, old, crafty, cunning, and careless.

She looked out of the windows, and the darkness and misery of the neighbourhood smote her as a blow. But far to the west, in the soot-filled sky, was a faint spot of a light. It was the reflection of the myriads of lights in Electric Park.

Della pouted. And the awakened woman once more was a frivolous girl; "I knew it was too good to be true." She shrugged her shoulders. "Well, back to the Factory for me now, I s'pose."

But the Factory lay back there in those awful dark streets. She turned to the glass — it was second nature with her. And she saw that she was good to look upon in spite of horror and terror, good to look upon, pleasing to the eyes of men.

"The Factory, eh?" she breathed musingly as she studied herself. She turned sideways to the mirror, she looked over her shoulder with a hand on her hip.

The Factory? The picture welled up before her like a nightmare — the dark morning arisings, the hurry to work, the dark shop, the dark street at night, and the hopelessness, the absolute hopelessness, unto the end.

And then she thought of lights, and strong perfumes, and pretty clothes, and plenty of food, and — and Binger — Binger would be waiting. Amidst the lights. And Freddy was gone. Poor, poor Freddy!

"The Factory, eh?" repeated Della, softly. "Nit!"

Then she fluffed her front puffs and put on her hat. The battle could not end otherwise. At the door she paused and gazed wistfully once around the dingy little room. Then she went out. And this is the end of our Della.

CHAPTER XXX

IT WAS on Friday, three days after the riot, and Mag was thankful she was feeling stronger. She had been able to rise from bed this morning and take some food from the table. This augured but one thing, she knew; she would soon be well. So she was quite content this morning, was Old Mag, and the world seemed good and easy to live in. She marvelled a little at the new feeling of release from pain and weakness and worry that seemed to have come over her; but then she considered her feat of arising alone and reaching the table, and returning to bed without a single mishap, and she realized that this was nothing more or less than a sign of her improved condition. She had been depressed and worried over the future because she had been ill; now she was growing well and strong and the depression had fled as a natural consequence. Old Mag nodded and smiled in great satisfaction with herself and all things. She lay with her hands folded limply over her breast, her eyes wide open, staring out before her at the wall. Just the smallest little ray of morning sunlight had managed to steal its way in through her window, and it drew with a dashing stroke a band of gold across the bare, unwhitewashed plaster. The sunbeam was out of place there, but like those wonderful people

who make themselves at home and radiate familiarity under all conditions, it proceeded to grow wider and warmer until it had quite mastered the dreariness of the room with its golden rays.

The sunbeam stirred Mag. The sun and she were comparative strangers. It had had but little part in her whole existence. Her conception of Light would have been gas jet; and yet this morning the sun had reached her and touched her pain-racked being. It soothed and at the same time agitated her. It was pleasant to lie and watch the beam, and Mag indulged herself in a broader smile. The sun also in its subtle, mysterious fashion for the moment gave her a little new strength, and with its insistent, never-ending domination over all things living, it called upon that little strength to use and exert itself.

“I am getting better,” thought Old Mag. “I’ll be getting up pretty soon.”

She was right; she would be getting up soon, though not for the reason she fancied.

In the midst of Mag’s pleasant reveries there came heavy footsteps in the hall, a hoarse voice asking directions, and a knock on her door. Old Mag had no need to answer, for the door swung open immediately after the knock, and in trod a short, thick-necked man who looked like a constable and introduced himself as the agent of the building. He did not explain his visit at first. He came in, carefully closed the door behind him, and with trained eye he methodically appraised the value of each item of furniture in the room at a glance. The furniture

was not of great value. The agent saw it, pursed his lips, and after a last glance around turned his attention to the woman on the bed. Her, too, he appraised, with practically the same eyes and the same result as he had judged the furniture.

“It’s rent day,” said he, curtly.

One must have lived in Clay Court to appreciate the significance of this.

The rent is due. The agent is here to collect it. Please God, we may have the amount, for the streets are cruel to sleep in, and there will be no other place to go. The agent is not a Human Being on rent day; he is Fate, blind, inexorable, an ever-hanging threat over the heads of the folks to whom rent money is a problem never completely solved. He knows who has and who has not the money when he enters, does the agent; the lips of the unfortunate tremble when they see him come.

Old Mag made no reply. She could not reply. She could not utter a word. All her life the rent agent had threatened to be a curse to her, and now the curse had come true. For Old Mag did not have the rent.

“It’s Friday,” said the agent. “Did you hear?” He regarded her with suspicious, angry eyes. Mag knew she was committing a grievous sin by lying there sick, helpless, and without money. She was breaking all the established laws of justice and civilization. She knew it; it was all in the agent’s expression.

“Yessir,” said Mag feebly.

“Well?”

No answer. The agent glowered. Old Mag turned her eyes away in shame.

"It's rent day!" The agent bellowed ironically.

"Is it?" said Mag, trying to smile.

The agent sneered. He looked at her with a world of shrewd accusation in his pig eyes.

"Aw, hell!" said he, and Mag blushed.

"You better be finding another place to room," said the agent abruptly.

"Why — !"

"Why?" thundered the agent. Why! "Good God! You 'spose we run this house for the benefit of the likes of you?"

"Course not," said Mag, "but — but — "

"But nothing. You can't pay, can you? That's what I'm talking about. Hah? Can you pay? Come on; cough up the rhino. Let me see the price of your rent clinking in me hand, or else get busy and get ready to be sponging some place else by the time I have somebody else in here who can pay their way."

"I ain't been sponging," said Mag.

"Ain't you? Ain't you? What d'you call it then, would I dare to ask? Been living here on somebody else's coin, ain't you? Somebody else been paying your room rent, ain't they? Somebody else been feeding you, ain't they? Some woman, wasn't it? Well, that looks mighty like sponging to me; room rent and meal ticket from somebody else. Anyhow, that stuff's all off now. She won't pay no more room rent for you around here. She — "

Something sinister in his tone impelled Mag to gasp out: "Something's happened — ?"

"Yer friends put her in the hospital," sneered the agent. "Broke two ribs in her chest. She'll prob'bly croak. She's through here. And so're you, and you'd better get ready to make a move and make it be quick."

Old Mag had fallen back on the pillows aghast at the news as it was told to her. She stared at the agent as if she did not understand. Miss Ruth hurt? That wasn't possible. Who would hurt her?

"Did you hear what I said?" growled the man, irritated by the unblinking eyes.

"Yes," said Mag. "Yes, I'll get out."

"Right away, too."

"All right," said Mag. "I'll go to-day." She lay still for a long time after he had gone. But for the wide open eyes one would have said she slept, so still was she. Miss Ruth was gone — In the hospital — And might die — And she must get out.

"How handy it comes in," said Mag, thankfully, "that I'm feeling stronger!"

She rose, and though she found that she was not so strong on her feet as in the bed, and that the wall, the chair, the table were convenient supports to catch at and save herself from falling, she managed to dress with considerable care. It was a slow process, but in the end she was ready to go. In the hall she met the woman next door.

"Do you know where they took Miss Ruth?" asked Mag.

"To Mercy Hospital," said the woman, "But you ain't going there, are you?"

"Sure," said Margaret. "Can't you see I'm all right."

The sun blinded her in the street and the heat haze made her reel.

"Mercy Hospital," she repeated. "That's south."

The blocks were interminably long, and the number of them was without end. At times she sat down in the shade of hallways to rest. Once she was ordered out with an oath. At another time a child called: "Ma! Ma! Her's a beggar woman!" Mag got up hurriedly and went on.

She lost her bearings at this time and a boy whom she asked for directions, unwittingly sent her six squares out of her way. At last she reached the doors of the hospital and entered. Trembling she spoke Ruth's name, and fearfully she awaited the reply.

"Yes, yes; I know the name," said the old, spectacled registry clerk, puckering his brows. "She was here, she was here, but — — —"

Mag's heart was in her throat. "She ain't dead?"

"No, no; she ain't dead; she ain't dead," said the clerk. "But she isn't here any more. They took her away — to her friends, I understand. Oh! Yes, yes; I remember, I remember, now; there was a piece in the paper about it, a big piece. They took her home, to her home. I remember it all now. They took her home. Way up in that swell suburb — on the north shore, it is."

"Far from here?"

"Far? Why, yes; yes. You take a car, and go down-

town. Then you take a train. Yes, it's pretty far, all right. But that's where it is. Out in that north shore suburb!

Old Mag went out without a word. She didn't take a car down town; she started to walk. It was a hot day.

Late in the afternoon, toward evening, Mag sat down on the clean steps of a great brown-stone house out on the Drive. A lady, a wonderful, beautiful lady, beautifully dressed, well-fed, came out and looked down at her kindly.

"Where are you going?" asked the wonderful lady. Mag smiled and fumbled aimlessly with her fingers.

"I donno," she said. "I forget, y'see — No, I forget — It was too far, too far. See?"

Tears stood in the wonderful lady's beautiful brown eyes, soft, tender tears of compassion and pity.

"Poor thing!" she whispered to the maid who stood at her side.

"What shall I do, Mis' Clews?" asked the maid.

"Poor, poor thing!" repeated Mrs. Dicky Clews. "Call an officer, Hulda. The poor woman has lost her reason."

The wonderful lady went back into the great brown-stone house. Old Mag sat on the clean steps, and smiled and smiled and fumbled aimlessly with her fingers.

CHAPTER XXXI

WITNESS the working of Power.

Dicky Clews grew almost perturbed when some of the foregoing events became known to him. The papers got hold of the story of Old Mag and the Clews' steps, and though they naturally never mentioned Dicky's name, Dicky heard the truth and came asking if such things were true. Then he got the whole story.

"My word!" said he. "We must do something. You say this Freddy lad is an all right man?"

"One of the kind that brightens the world, Dicky; a man and brother."

"And I believe you said, a good fellow. Surely got to do something. Good gad! Girl gone to hell, I suppose, without him. And a dirty deal, too, you say, from the police. Well, don't care if it isn't; it's got to be straightened out. I'll see somebody."

He did. He went to his man of business, and they sent a message to Inspector Donahey. The inspector came, in plain clothes and with his hat in his hand.

"It can't be done, sir," said he, when Dicky named his wishes. "We got to make examples of these fellows after such things. Wouldn't be any respect for the department if we didn't. They fought the police."

"Sacrilege!" said Dicky. "See your point of view,

however, inspector; got to keep fear instilled, and all that. *This* is an exception, however, *our* exception. *We* want him turned loose."

The inspector shrugged his shoulders with the air of a faithful servant whose superiors interfere with the proper performance of his duties.

"Well, if that's the case, all right," said he. "But I tell you, gentlemen, you're making a mistake. There's only one way to keep these people where they belong, and that's to keep them *damn* good and scared."

"Quite right, inspector, quite right," said Dicky's man of business. He was not at all in sympathy with his client's determined conduct.

"The idea has come to me lately," said Dicky languidly, "that perhaps we haven't quite got the—what d'you call it?—the right to say where these people belong. Just my idea, you know. Anyhow, I don't believe they're going to stand for this—what d'you call it, inspector?—keep-them-scared policy much longer. Just another idea of mine, of course; but as this is my own mistake, if it is one, and as I'm paying the chit—I guess we'll have to put it through, what?"

So the wires were pulled, and the machinery of the Law was made to slip a cog, and Freddy went free of jail, with a face like stone and a fringe of gray around the edge of his red hair; but the curse that those days had laid up on him will not leave him entirely as long as he lives. And Inspector Donahey made another payment on the glazed brick apartment building he was buying on the South Side.

Dicky was Freddy's sworn friend after their first meeting.

"If there's anything I can do for that boy," said he; but there was nothing he could do but try to find Della, and there even Dicky's resources failed. Money did much, of course. It caused the nether worlds of several proud American cities to be inventoried to the last lost soul, caused the gilded downtown places where the painted pack hunts, by night, to be watched for weeks, turned every police officer in our city into a searcher for Della; and it was all in vain. It also ran the oily J. Q. A. Binger into the deep hole reserved for promoters black-listed among financiers, but Binger could throw no light on Della, for he had lost her himself.

"Chorus girl — some road company," said Dicky out of the depths of his knowledge. "Don't worry, old man. Takes 'em about a year to get sick of that. Then if she's worth what you think she is she'll remember you. Know what you're worth, too. Cheer up."

"I was born that way," said Freddy, trying to grin, "but something's put a crimp in me."

Later he said thoughtfully: "It's the girls that this world is hard with."

The ease with which Power had moved things had opened my eyes. Dicky had accomplished with ease what our darkest struggles must have failed in. Here was where the help must come from; the Controlling Power must begin by regulating the Machine.

"Dicky!" I cried. "You are the one who must do it. You can do it. You must change things."

But Dicky, too, had seen considerable light. Given ten years younger and, consequently, less deeply rooted respect for family, traditions, and his own sort's opinion, and there is no telling what Dicky might have done. But even as it was the summer had not been without effect.

"No," he said, with a seriousness that no one could have suspected him of, "it isn't us who will do it; we're too stale. It's going to be done, of course, because you can feel it in the air, you know. A sort of — what d'you call it? — force. That's what's going to do the trick. We're going to help naturally, we — what d'you call us? — idle exploiters, and so forth. We're going to help because we're getting dissatisfied, too. It's working above and below — that force, you know. Some of the fellows, the young 'uns, actually ask about kid labour and that sort of thing before putting their money behind a thing. They do, for a fact. Mysterious, but true. *I know* one who did."

"One?"

"One. As for me, I'm going to draw out of that *damn* Consolidated thing — as soon as I can without losing too much, you know."

Hope for Dicky!

"Say, but that was a terr'ble old speech, Miss Arthur let go at us, terr'ble," he continued. "Hope they didn't hurt her bad?"

"*They* didn't hurt her, Dicky."

"Come again?"

"'They' is the wrong word. We did it. All of us;

you and I — everybody — when we sat still and permitted Clay Court to grow up next door to us without opening an eye to see what it was or what it was doing to its people. A bad neighbour makes your own nest uncomfortable; and we're all neighbours, if we'll only see it. That's selfish and practical, so you can understand."

Dicky thought it over for some time.

"Yes," he drawled, "I guess it's pretty late in the day to get away with Cain's argument. Old Cain was pretty much narrow-minded, anyhow. Short on — what d'you call it? — experience with his fellow men. But, I say, old man," he continued more briskly, "you haven't answered my question about Miss Arthur, have you?"

"She will get well," I said.

Dicky looked up at the words. He regarded me with new interest. There were few things the indolent Dicky couldn't see when he opened his eyes.

"Hah! I see that somebody had some luck over there, after all," he said.

"What?"

"Congratulations," said Dicky.

CHAPTER XXXII

THIS is not my story. It is not Ruth's story, nor is it ours together. Therefore I shall not tell of the black days that followed the riot for us, of the fever that Ruth's injury plunged her into, of the weary days and nights when she lay on the border-land of eternity, when it seemed that I had won her only to lose her, and all the world was a place of bitterness and woe. I shall not tell of these things, I repeat, nor of that joyous morn when Ruth opened her eyes quietly, safe and sound in the land of living at last, smiled, and raised up a feeble arm to clasp about my neck.

I shall tell, however, of the last visit we paid to Clay Court one clear Sunday afternoon when autumn, like a cooling hand was beginning to cool the city's brow, fevered by the hot, mad summer.

It was Ruth's first day out. She was very weak, but the day was kind to her. We drove slowly. In the park the dead leaves were dotting the dying grass. They fell at the slightest breeze; they lay unmoved on the still waters of the lagoons. Along the boulevard the gardeners had covered precious roots and shrubs with many coatings of straw; and the reddened cheeks and quick steps of the pedestrians told that autumn's hearty influence had begun.

But this exquisite blending of two seasons made little difference in Clay Court. The changing seasons count for little here, save that one may be worse than another. The whisperings of spring are hailed merely as the forerunners of the tormenting hot weather; the *nuances* of fall predict only the murderous sufferings of cold weather. The trouble is that no season holds forth to Clay Court the offering of new hopes and promises that elsewhere cause their coming to be hailed with joy. One is about the same as another, though winter, naturally, is worst. Yet even Clay Court could not make entirely unlovely such a perfect Sunday afternoon in autumn as the day when Ruth and I came back to the Tenement, to the little white room that had been hers on the third floor, and where she had not been since that Tuesday in August. But the room was white no longer.

Out of doors the world was at peace with itself and with the universe, but the Tenement was as noisy, as brawling, as much like an uneasy kettle as ever. We sat side by side on two of Ruth's chairs — grown grimy since her departure — and above and below, and all around, raged the tumult which here always was present. Children bawled and babbled, harsh-voiced mothers, weary mothers, shouted fretful objurgations; and ever and anon came bull-like male roars, alternated with shrill, adolescent laughter. It was the same Tenement, the same noise, all the same.

“Ah, jees! Coming home with a jag and not a cent in our clothes, an’ me an’ the kids starving!”

Ruth asked for the Bruggers. She wished to make

our guardianship of Joey secure. Joey, at least, was saved.

"Trun out. Wouldn't pay no rent. They don't live together no more, but I don't know where she's at."

"Mrs. Perkins?"

"They say she went to his folks, and they couldn't help her, and she came back and worked in the Factory for awhile, till she got sick. No; nobody knows where she's at now. Was these folks friends of yours, lady?"

New faces, new names, new families, yet all the same, all as it had been since the Tenement was built, all as it will be as long as the building endures. The people were different, practically all of them, for moving is common here, but on their faces, in their bodies, throughout their whole beings was told the same story as had gone before. To the empty white face of the newest baby the strangers duplicated the Tenement's old inhabitants. The great battle had been fought, the débris had been cleared away; and it was all as it had been before, as if the strife had not been. One, two, five years more and it might be done over again; the elements all were there again for the brewing of a fresh storm.

Ruth sank together and grew small and wan as she heard and saw. She was looking far away, far beyond the walls of the room, and presently she began to speak:

"So this is the way of it. The war goes on. Man fights, and the stronger slays the weaker brother. All come into the fight, the large and the small, the weak and powerful, the helpless and disinterested, for that is the way of the Scheme — of life — here — to-day. It

couldn't be otherwise while the law of fang and claw prevails. Oh, blind, blind man, will you never see?

"Who was in the wrong? Both. The Company first; Rinehart afterward. And so foolishly, ignorantly wrong."

She drew her hands before her and folded them abstractedly in her lap. She seemed as in a dream now, and, her words came brokenly and in little more than a whisper.

"And God said: 'Let there be light, and there was light;' but not for such places as these. No; we have taken it all for ourselves up there in the bright parts of the world; and none of us see how we stand between these folks and the sun, not one of us stops to think of getting along with a little less light, of letting a tiny ray filter down here. Yet God surely meant His light for these, too. And it would take so little to bring some of it here, and the results would be wonderful beyond compare!

"But now there is darkness. Della is lost in it. It is an accident that Joey is saved, and Freddy. And they are here by scores and hundreds. Freddy was standing near the door as we came in; Della came out of the hall and Joey, looked down at us from an upper window. They are all here, to grow up here and to become the sport of the black Fate we make for them by monopolizing the light. Whenever the time is ripe, when the occasion comes, Fate will play with them just as it played with our friends, in its strangely unfair way. Helpless pawns in a game in which they have no share, no chance to win. And yet in each of them is the divine

soul of a brother or sister which must be killed before the slum's victory is quite complete. But slain it is; we have seen now how it must be slain with things as they are; and it will continue — How can it continue after the world knows?"

Her voice died away, and her last words were something like a sob as she reached for my hand and gripped it, seeking the touch of a brother being who understood. So we sat, hand in hand and silent, while the picture she had painted hung before our eyes, and the life that they picture epitomized voiced itself around us. The afternoon drew on toward evening, and the sun, soon shut out by the buildings in the west, quitted the room, and the short, gloomy twilight began to come on. And even as the day was subdued, so the Tenement grew more quiet, and for a moment it was still. Then a child cried piteously across the hall, and a tin rattled upon the stairs.

"Shall we go home?" She spoke to me, but still her eyes were toward the wall and far away.

"Do you want to stay?"

She waited awhile before speaking, and again her voice was the voice of a dreamer seeking his way out of a troublesome maze.

"Can one do any good by remaining? Is it a work that can be done, and is weak human flesh fitted for it? It is so vast, so far removed from life as we live it to-day, so far from man it seems — because he is so far from God. But it cannot be like this always. It cannot be. Some day — oh, if one only dared to hope! — But it is hard to hope after one has seen."

She roused herself after this, as if the sound of her words had struck home and told her what she was saying. She cast off the momentary temptation to weakness.

“What am I saying? We may hope, of course. We must. It is sin not to; and hope — yes, hope is before us now as it never was before. The sign is on the face of the earth and within man’s heart. The spirit of goodness has sowed its seed, and the crop is growing, growing to fruition. It is only in the hearts of a few that we can see it, only a few. But they are the advance guard, the forerunners that tell us the race is impregnated with God. These few are the signs that are given us that we may hope. They are far in advance, but the rest will follow. Their eyes are clearer, their hearts cleaner, their souls less ruled by finite ambitions, and they are spreading the true light among their kind. They are few in number. They are a handful in the midst of unaccountable multitudes of multitudes, and the multitudes rush on without heeding what they say. But Jesus Christ at first was only one obscure individual and his followers a handful of discredited cranks, forgotten and overlooked by His slayers. The world has strayed far from Him after it found Him; but a few, a precious handful, have seen how we have strayed and are striving to point the way back. And His spirit will be with them, will be with this few. And some will write, and the world will laugh at them, if it notices them at all; and others will plead with the spoken word, and the police will lock them up. But others will come forward and go on. The flame will continue to burn. You can

no more stop it than they could kill Christ's spirit by destroying the mortal flesh. Hope ——”

She leaned forward suddenly, a new, eager light in her eyes, as if the vision had spoken and the dream was clear.

“Why,” she continued in a voice so low that it seemed awed, “it is the day of hope and of promise. Christ's spirit is coming back to earth again, and manifesting itself in the deeds of a few men. Heaven grant that man's eyes are not too blinded by the things of his day to see Him when He comes.”

She stopped speaking in that abrupt, final way that told when her speech was at an end. Still we sat silent, and the room grew darker, but now Ruth seemed to smile.

In the rear rooms they were lighting the lamps, and the windows began to close against the chill evening.

“Why,” murmured Ruth, “will not man begin this work now?”

I made no answer.

“John,” she said after awhile, “what is wisdom?”

“Perhaps nothing more than the faith and patience to wait?”

“Ah!” she sat up and smiled, and now she was radiant.

“Where did you learn that, John?”

“Here, I suppose” I said, and she nodded that she understood.

Suddenly a little girl laughed merrily out in the hall, and her laughter, as natural, as care-free, as hopeful as the trilling of a bird, rang through the building.

Ruth rose. She leaned on my arm. The patience was back in her eyes.

“Let us go home now,” she said, “we have heard the coming generation laugh.”

And with this, reader, we bid farewell to Clay Court.

CHAPTER XXXIII

JOEY sat in the grass before the farm house, and stared at the Grown Up Pup.

It was his tenth day on the farm, and he was the first person on record to look twice at the Pup without laughing. The Pup was a black and white hound, four years old, two feet long, half a foot high, and with black-brown ears that swept the ground. He had never got over being a Pup. His presumed function in life, as testified by his pedigree, was to hunt rabbits. In reality he lived only to love and make love to everything that crossed his path, from chicks just out of the incubator to tired, surly hired men.

The Pup took charge of Joey, upon his arrival, just as he did of every visitor to the farm. When the driver lifted the little fellow out of the carriage the Pup came waddling forward on his short, crooked legs with the grave geniality becoming to me upon whom devolved the duty of offering guests a sincere welcome. His manner on these occasions always suited the character of the new arrival. To hearty souls, no matter of what age, sex, or standing, the Pup came forward with gleeful barks and playfulness. To Joey he came slowly, and, touching his nose to the boy's hand, looked wistfully up to catch his eye.

Joey started and drew back his hand.

“ ‘S he a biter?” he demanded.

The driver stopped midway in the process of loosening a trace.

“Hah?” he said, dropping the trace in amazement. “Bite? Him? *Him?*” He laughed hired-man fashion, with a stamping of feet. “Why, boy, if that Pup heerd you say that he’d go off some place and cry hisself plum t’ death. Bite? Why, he won’t even bite flies.”

Joey was a bewildered child, but he could not let this pass.

“You’re a kidder, ain’t you?” he said dryly.

The Pup’s mild eyes grew soft with pain and surprise at the rejection of his advances. When the driver led Joey up to the house the dog followed slowly in the boy’s footsteps. He was a puzzled Pup. His heart had gone out to Joey on first sight; why didn’t this boy do like other boys? Pull his tail, for instance? Something was wrong. This boy was different from any boy the Pup ever had seen, sniffed, felt, or heard. When the Pup playfully gnawed at his heels the boy jumped and cried out. The Pup dropped back. He was puzzled.

A little later when Joey came out to sit in a big chair on the old veranda the Pup was waiting with new advances. No use trying to win this boy as he did others. The Pup trotted sedately up to Joey, looked him full in the eyes for many seconds, then laid his head on the little knees and stood there expectantly, hopefully, still looking up.

“What’s the matter?” said the Pup’s eyes. “Why

aren't we chasing each other around the yard?" But Joey did not understand. The natural brotherhood of boys and dogs was something beyond his ken. He drew his knee away and shrank back in the chair. For a few seconds the Pup remained standing there, an expression in his eyes that would have won him a pat from anybody but — Joey. Then his head drooped. Lower and lower it fell until the long ears flopped on the floor. The Pup turned and walked slowly and sadly to the end of the veranda and sat down. He was a lost Pup; the world suddenly had gone askew.

In those first days Joey was in the dazed condition that is to be expected of a child undergoing transition from one world to another. Things were not real to him. He was skeptical; he didn't believe that things were as his eyes saw them. Somewhere there was a catch; some day it would be demonstrated; then all these things around him would vanish. For they were not, they could not be real. If they were real, then he had no business to be among them. They were not part of his world. This new home of his was part of a strange universe, a strange earth under his feet, strange sky above his head, strange creatures all around him, and a strange, a very strange, system of living obtaining with all. Well, it was all right, because his friends were the kind that wouldn't play tricks on him, but he would wait awhile before he decided whether he was awake or dreaming.

"What have I got to do?" he asked the hired man.

"Do?"

"Yes. You can't con me that I don't have to do something."

"Why?"

"'Cause you can't. What kind of a game is this — where yuh pretend I don't have to do anything? Don't you s'pose I know there ain't no such game going?"

The hired man didn't quite understand, either, but he said:

"Your job is to laugh and grow fat."

Joey gave him a bored look.

"You fancy kidders make my head ache," said he.

He could not understand, that was the sum of it all. His faculties were incapable of comprehending the scheme of life as pursued in the country. It was hard to convince him that it was proper to stay out of doors all day long. He had never heard of people living that way. He was more at home in-doors, naturally. There were at least walls there, and doors, and floors and ceilings to shut one in as in a little box, with all God's world of sky and wind, and hills and trees shut out; and this was how he was comfortable. He had been shut in all his life, and that seemed the only reasonable way of living to him.

Time after time he was taken out and introduced to the young chickens.

"Here's a job for you, Joey; take this pan of corn and throw it around to those chicks."

"Yessir."

He would distribute the corn as he had seen others do it, and he would do it as quickly as he could. Left

alone for a moment, he would cast a questioning glance around, then he would wander wanly toward the house, enter noiselessly and sit down in some lonely corner, a crumpled little figure more dwarf than child. The Pup followed him wistfully, step by step, out of doors; he was wearing the deepest of dog mourning, was the Pup, though he couldn't understand why it should be so.

It was in the still, clean Indian summer nights, when the bark of a dog on a neighbouring farm filled the whole starlit world with sound, and the farm house and its environs lay as quiet as the moonlight that bathed it, that Joey suffered most. It was hard for him to sleep. He was afraid. Senses accustomed to the muddled night life of the Tenement could not rest at ease in a room where there was nothing but peace, and comfort, and fresh air. As the system of the drug victim craves the poison that is wrecking it, so Joey at night craved noises and smells, stuffiness and the sense of a swarm of humans cluttered around him; and when those early autumn nights were at their best he would start up in bed, awakened by the sheer peace and silence.

"Gee, but it's noisy here nights," he said.

No, Joey was not overjoyed with the farm at first; he was living naturally for the first time in his life, and it was cruelly hard on him.

"Ain't there no coppers in this park?" For days that was as near as he could come to understanding what the free country was. He wondered why people should live in a park all the time, and who told them they could do it.

Once he confided: "Gee, but things are far here."
"Far?"

He nodded. He was looking out toward a range of hills crowned blue with the Indian summer smoke, and he shrank as the distance impressed itself upon his unaccustomed eyes.

"Gee!" he whispered, awe-stricken. "That's too far — for anything to be."

One of those mornings as he sat on the veranda, the disconsolate Pup nearby, a neighbour's boy, a stocky, red-cheeked imp about Joey's size, but years younger, swung up on the gate on his way to school and called cheerily: "Hello, there!"

Joey did not answer.

The boy on the gate rattled his copper-toed boots along the pickets.

"What's your name?" he asked.

After awhile Joey spoke. He said: "What's it tuh you?"

The other stopped his kicking and stared.

"Huh! I didn't mean nuthin'," he said; and after an embarrassed moment he volunteered: "I live next house up the road from here. I got a dog 'at kin lick 'at Pup all to pieces. He's a shepherd, mine is. My paw gave him to me for my own last Christmas, and he minds me quicker'n anybody."

Joey sat sullenly silent.

"Where'd yuh work?" he said finally.

"Huh! I don't work, 'cept 'tato buggin' in the summer when there ain't no school anyhow and the bugs is bad."

Bet I kin bug more 'tatoes than you kin. I kin awmost keep up with John Potts, and my paw says John's the best hired man we ever hed."

Joey shifted uneasily.

"Aw," he said, "what yuh talking about?"

The farmer boy stared, nonplussed again. Then he played his trump card.

"Say, I'll let you see our new Morgan colt if you come up to our place. He's jist this high and we kin pet him and he ain't skeery a bit, but, we can't get on him, because his back ain't strong 'nough yit or I'd let you ride him, too, but you can ride old Fan, she's strong enough."

The boy paused, breathless and expectant.

"Go wan," said Joey, "run along an' peddle your papers."

The Pup looked from the departing boy to Joey with sad eyes. What had gone wrong with the world?

Poor, beclouded little Joey! What a struggle must there have been within your soul when first you were offered the things for which your childish heart hungered but which too much experience prompted you to reject in suspicion.

"It is good, take it," said the eternal boy-heart. But the over-developed sense of fear warned: "Look out; there's a string to it."

So the days went by, the golden harvest days of the year, when the partridges drummed in the bright-hued brush, and the hired man sang as he swung his corn knife, and outwardly Joey remained the same, a stranger to

his new world and its creatures, a little Ishmael of the tenements. But within the miracle was working. For not even Joey could resist the constant wooing of the **Grown Up Pup.**

It was the tenth day, and Joey sat in the grass and looked at the Pup. It was the Pup's day to shine. For ten long, cheerless days he had suppressed his natural self. It was enough. It was too much. To-day was the day to break loose.

The Pup had seduced Joey down from the veranda by barking ferociously at a clump of lilacs, charging into the bushes, growling as if engaged in mortal combat with strange beasts, then coming out with a rush and a roar, as if pursued by forty demons. Joey finally came down to see what was in the lilacs.

There was nothing there.

The Pup's first trick having met with success, he essayed the second. He ran crazily around in a circle, then suddenly, from behind, he butted Joey in the knee joints, and galloped away.

Joey sat down suddenly. Victory Number Two for the Pup. Things were working out well to-day. To show that it was all in fun he leaped upon the boy, and together they went rolling upon the ground. Without waiting to see how this demonstration of good fellowship was received the Pup put forward his best performance, that of trying to catch himself in a race around a small circle. Dear reader, hast ever seen a long, low, rakish hound dog, with flapping ears, trying to catch himself,

and swearing to the limit of his vocabulary because the self-pursuit fails?

Joey held out for a long time, but finally he gave in. He laughed, and it was strange to hear him. Said he: "You're a pippin: you're a pippin!" And "Pippin" has been the Pup's name to this day.

The dog stopped in his wild careening at the sound of laughter. He stood still and cocked his ears and looked. Yes; yes, the strange boy was laughing, like other boys. His face was open, and his eyes were shining, like other boys' when they were glad. He had the brother look. Yes; yes, it had come at last. The dog walked straight to Joey, thrust up his face, and looked in the boy's eyes; and Joey's little hand went up on the Pup's head and timidly patted it, and he said: "Pippin, Pippin," and the barriers began to fade away.

Pippin — now so christened — promptly proceeded to go mad with delight. He chased himself around a circle, he leaped into the air, bounding up and down as if clearing obstacles; he rolled frantically in the grass; he stood on one ear; and all the time he chanted in dog-talk the pean of the winning of a new friend. Joey reached forth and grabbed timidly at one of the wildly waving legs. Words fail in the attempt to picture Pippin's delight at this.

"Brr — ow-wow-wow!" he roared.

Joey threw a twig at him.

"Yowp, yowp!" Pippin, pretending to be mortally frightened, dashed away in a wild race. Back he came, still racing, tore past Joey, just out of reach, tore past him

again, then trotted away, still just out of reach. Joey scrambled to his feet and started after him. Pippin concealed his glee this time and kept on trotting, just out of reach until the boy lunged for him, then dashing away and running circles that brought him so near that Joey's hand brushed his tail as it swept past. It was Pippin's old game, "Come and catch me," but it was new to Joey, and he followed, sometimes laughing, but even not yet daring to throw body and soul into the fun as a real boy should. He had much to unlearn, then much to learn. But he had a good teacher.

Now came Pippin's master stroke. With true pup cunning he laid down his tail so that it led, little by little, so gradually that Joey failed to observe, out of the yard and onto the oat stubble that adjoined. Beyond the stubble lay the big field of corn. The corn was high and thick, like a young forest, and once in it no little boy could hope to see whether he was being led. Beyond the corn field — ah! there lay the consummation of this fair morning's deep-laid plot.

The dog worked by circles over the short clover of the stubble and subtly led the way to the corn. Here there was much joy for dog and boy. One could dodge from row to row, pretend to hide behind great stalks, or otherwise indulge in the "Catch me" game to the heart's content. But Pippin kept working on. Through the corn they went, still pursuing and pursued, until presently they found themselves in the Magic Land for boys and dogs, the Woods, where who knows what wonderful adventures may befall!

The poplars were turning a dainty yellow, the sumachs were blood red, and the hardy oaks grudgingly had given up the edge of their leaves to the ruddy tints that Nature spreads over the land with the first hard frosts. A flock of bluejays rose stridently to protest the invasion, and a red squirrel with quivering tail sat in a little pine and chattered his opinion of little boys and dogs. Overhead flapped a string of crows: "Caw, caw, caw!" Pippin stopped gambolling and looked up at Joey.

"This is the place for us," said his ears.

Ah, how generous the woods are in early autumn! Pippin nosed suspiciously in a brush pile at Joey's feet, and out leaped a startled rabbit, and instantly the woods were filled with the trailing tongue of Pippin on a warm scent.

It was a short chase, for the rabbit was thoroughly frightened and scrambled for dear life to safety in a nearby stone fence, but before it ended the blood was leaping through Joey's veins as it never had leaped before. For a moment he stood trembling with a new excitement, as the dog, also trembling, took the scent and gave chase. Then he followed, rushing straight through the brush and shouting aloud without knowing why.

The rabbit had found shelter deep in the depths of the wall-like fence. Pippin, mad with the trailing instinct, tore at the stones and ferociously voiced his chagrin. He tried to squeeze his long body into small openings, although he had tried to do it a hundred times before and knew that it could not be done. He scratched at the unyielding bowlders. He stood back and whined.

Then he swore a little, dog-fashion, and tore at bunny's fortress again.

Joey danced around, all excitement, but soon he understood what was to be done. When the hired man came over from the corn field to see what the noise was about Joey had picked a hole in the small stones on top of the fence and was tugging away at a boulder which his feeble strength could not budge. He was working shoulder to shoulder with Pippin, and he was flushed and sweaty, and very much alive.

"Gee!" he cried. "A cat jumped in here and she can't get out."

This afternoon the hired man came into the house on tiptoes. He touched his lips with a finger and pointed out to the yard. There was noise and confusion out there. The bark of Pippin rang out hilariously. Then Joey's voice was heard shouting at him. Then the voice of the boy from up the road. Then a confusion of sounds of running and tumbling boys and dog. Then Joey's laughter, uncontrolled and uncontrollable.

The hired man waved his hat.

"Glory be!" he whispered loudly. "That young un's learnin' how to play."

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